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THE EXPOSITOR.

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EDITED BY THE REV.

SAMUEL COX.

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OF RELIGION

VOLUME III.

FOURTH EDITION.

London:
HODDER & STOUGHTON,
27, PATERNOSTER ROW.
MDCCCLXXX.

ser. 1
v. 3
1876:1

The Gresham Press:

UNWIN BROTHERS, CHILWORTH AND LONDON.

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PREFACE.

So many similar and equally hopeful enterprises having failed, it was a somewhat bold venture to start a Magazine devoted solely to the exposition of Holy Writ. It was still more bold, perhaps, to dispense with the usual arts of puffing, promising, advertising, and leave the Magazine to make its own way, on its own merits, as best it could. I am happy to say, however, that the venture has already won a success which outstrips the expectations of those who started it; so that there is no longer any need for kindly critics to express the somewhat damaging and depressing hope "that it *may* meet with such a measure of success as will encourage the Editor and Publishers to go on with it." We fully intend to go on with it, and to spare no pains to make it more worthy of public approval and support. It has had a remunerative circulation from the very first; and that circulation is still gradually, and therefore it may be hoped the more surely, increasing.

For this success it is, no doubt, mainly indebted to the facts that it has had the singular good fortune of enlisting on its staff many of the ablest Expositors of almost every

section of the Christian Church; and that their work has met with a very generous appreciation from the Press. But it is also indebted, we think, to the stedfast endeavour on the part of its Contributors to cast the results of a scholarly study of the Bible in popular forms, and to apply them to the conscience and heart as well as to the mind. The *Spectator*, indeed, in a recent and very friendly notice of THE EXPOSITOR, has hinted that it is in danger of becoming too homiletical in its tone. But it must be remembered that, while written by Scholars, THE EXPOSITOR is not addressed to Scholars, but to the intelligent Christian public in general; that is, to men who value even the truths of Scripture mainly for their bearing on the emotions and, through the emotions, on the life. And, indeed, even exposition, if it is to be worth much, must be charged with that moral and spiritual fervour which finds a more direct expression in the homily.

THE EXPOSITOR.

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTER I.

THIS Epistle could not have been written if St. Peter had been at Rome at the time; nor could he have been there at any later time previous to the date of the Epistle to the Philippians. Hence, as Meyer observes, it furnishes a decisive proof that the alleged fact on which the whole Papal system rests—viz., that St. Peter for twenty-five years was exercising the functions of a bishop at Rome — is purely imaginary. But it does not follow that, as some over-zealous Protestants contend, he was never there. The tradition of his presence and martyrdom need not, and ought not, to be disputed.

In the Greeting (verses 1–7), with which the Epistle opens, two objects are uppermost in St. Paul's thoughts. (1) To assert the dignity of his apostolical office in its relation to Christ and to God. (2) To recognize the high condition of those whom he addresses, both as partakers of a Divine calling, and as placed by Divine Providence in a conspicuous position, commanding singular advantages and opportunities, as inhabiting the metropolis of the civilized world.

VERSE 1.—*Servant:* not his own, but belonging, in all that he had and was, to his Master, Christ: *whose I am and whom I serve.*——*Called to be an apostle:* a called apostle; not of his own will and pleasure, but by virtue of a heavenly *calling* [at Damascus, where he became *a chosen vessel*].——*Separated unto the gospel of God:* rather, set apart unto the preaching of the gospel of God.

VERSE 2.—There is no parenthesis. Not, *in the holy scriptures*, but, *in holy scriptures.*

VERSE 3.—*Concerning* relates to the *promise*, not *gospel concerning* (an expression never used); but *promised concerning.*——*Made:* rather, *born.*——*According to the flesh:* rather, as regards (his) bodily human nature (κατὰ σάρκα).

VERSE 4.—*Declared:* much better, *ordained*, as in Acts x. 42, where the Greek verb is the same. *Ordained* includes all that is signified by *declared* and something more, viz., a formal solemn investiture with the character of Sonship *with regard to the hearts and consciences of men.* In this respect God did not act simply as a witness, whose testimony only discloses, but cannot alter, the state of the case. The Resurrection, though it did not make Christ to be what He was not before,—*in Himself*,—yet, *relatively to the faith of men*, effected a most important change in his position, and might be truly said not only to *declare*, but to *constitute*, Him Son of God. The Socinian interpretation overlooks this distinction.

With power: rather, *mightily ordained* (with mighty overpowering display of Divine power).——*The spirit of holiness:* not the Holy Spirit, the third

Person of the Trinity; but the holiness of spirit wherewith Christ Himself was holy.——*By the resurrection:* rather, *by resurrection. From the dead,* rather, *of the dead* (especially that of Christ Himself, which alone St. Paul has here in view, as the Divine attestation of his holiness and Sonship).

Verse 5.—*Grace and apostleship:* not—as many have taken it—one thing only, the grace of apostleship; but two things perfectly distinct from one another; viz., his state as one of grace or favour with God, and his apostolical office.——*By whom we* (*i.e.*, I) *have received:* rather, *through whom,* through whose mediation.——*For obedience to the faith:* rather, *to the end* of obedience (of promoting obedience—the object of the apostleship).——*For his name:* rather, *for his name's sake* (by the increase of obedience to the faith God's name was increasingly hallowed and glorified).

Verse 7.—*Called to be saints: saints,* not *holy persons,* but members of a body which, *as a whole,* but not otherwise, was endowed with privileges corresponding to those of Israel after the flesh; not, however, like those acquired through hereditary transmission, but bestowed by a *call* addressed to each child of the spiritual Israel individually. Thus *called saints* (κλητοῖς ἁγίοις) stands in opposition to *born saints,* as Christianity to Judaism.

Proceeding now to open the subject of his Epistle, St. Paul begins (verses 8–12) by endeavouring to impress the Romans with the sincerity and earnestness of his desire to form a personal acquaintance with them. He calls on God to witness it, as the long

delay in its accomplishment might seem to make it doubtful. This desire is grounded on two motives, one immediate, the other more remote. The immediate motive lay in the reports which had reached him from all quarters (*all the world*—a natural, innocent, and graceful hyperbole) as to their faith; the other, the remoter but stronger of the two, was the hope of imparting to them some spiritual gift for the establishment of their faith. But, with a fine tact of natural politeness, he would divest himself of the superiority implied in the character of a donor and benefactor, and therefore represents himself as equally interested in the end which he had in view, because of the *comfort* which he would share with them. (*Cf.* xv. 32. *That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.*)

Verse 8.—*My God:* whose I am, and whom I serve (Acts xxvii. 23).——*Through Jesus Christ:* without whom he would have had neither cause nor will to be thankful.

Verse 9.—*For:* as a proof of the sincerity of my thanksgiving.——*Whom I serve with my spirit:* my spiritual mind; with all the powers of my higher nature, sustained and guided by the Holy Spirit, for my work in the Gospel.

Verse 10.—*Making request:* connected immediately with the end of the verse.——*Praying that I may come unto you, if by any means:* the thing desired being apparently almost hopeless.——*I might have a prosperous journey:* rather, *I might succeed in my aim.* The question was not, whether he should have

a *prosperous* journey, but whether he should be able to make the journey at all.

VERSE 13.—(*But was let hitherto.*) The Hebrew idiom renders the use of *but* for *and* allowable, but not necessary. *And was let hitherto*, without the parenthesis, would give the sense: *and, not through any change of purpose, but by circumstances beyond my control was let hitherto.*

VERSE 14.—*I am debtor:* A debt may be paid in either of two ways; by giving back that which is owed into the hands of the creditor, or by paying it to one to whom the creditor has transferred his right. So Horace:

> "Navis, quæ tibi creditum
> *Debes* Virgilium, finibus Atticis
> *Reddas* incolumem, precor."

God, wanting nothing for Himself, makes the debt, due to Him, payable to those among whom St. Paul was commissioned to preach the Gospel.

VERSE 15.—*As much as in me is:* rather, *as far as depends upon myself.*——*Ready:* hardly strong enough for πρόθυμον; rather, *eager.*

VERSE 16.—*Not ashamed:* notwithstanding the contempt with which it has been received by the wise and learned of this world, *wise after the flesh* (1 Cor. i. 26–28).——*The power of God:* the great instrument by which God displays his power for the salvation of mankind.——*To the Jew first:* according to the order of Providence by which the Gospel was first preached among the Jewish people, and also with respect to the privileges they enjoyed as having committed to them *the oracles of God.* (Rom. iii. 2.)

VERSE 17.—*The righteousness of God:* not a Divine attribute; not anything in God, but that righteousness which is in man, of God; having God for its Author and Giver. This righteousness is revealed *from faith*—as proceeding from faith—*to faith*—having faith for its origin and its end, its efficient and its final cause. It must be borne in mind that the faith which St. Paul is speaking of is not only a *motive principle* of right action and godly life, but also a *state* of supreme happiness, inasmuch as it is invariably accompanied by a consciousness of the Divine favour. It is not only a *way*, but an *end* to which the way leads: faith the starting-point, and faith the goal.

Still the words *from faith to faith* perfectly admit the sense adopted by many eminent Commentators: *from one degree of faith to another.* Faith, even though essentially unchangeable, is capable of continual progress. It includes two elements; one intellectual, the other emotional; one, by which it holds the truth with a firm conviction; the other, by which it exercises a hearty trust in the promises of God. Each of these elements may be growing and gaining strength. The truth may be held with a surer grasp and a livelier hope.——*The just shall live by faith:* rather, *the just by faith shall live* (inherit eternal life).

VERSE 18.—*Revealed:* not, *made known*, but, *brought to light:* not by word, but by deed.——*From heaven* (God's throne): *i.e.*, by a visible manifestation.——*Hold the truth:* rather, restrain, keep back the truth, so as to prevent it from producing its proper effect, yielding its natural fruits, exerting its

due influence on life and conduct.——*In unrighteousness:* rather, *by* unrighteousness. How was the wrath of God revealed? St. Paul has left this to be inferred by conjecture from the context. The most probable answer seems to be that it was by the abandonment of the Heathen world to the depravity and *excess of riot* (*cf.* 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4) described in this Chapter. *God gave them up.*

Verse 19.—*That which may be known* (by the exercise of man's natural faculties): so that it does not matter whether we understand *that which may be known*, or, *that which is known.* Each rendering excludes knowledge derived from preternatural Revelation; each implies that some, and practically sufficient, knowledge is within reach of human understanding.——*Shewed:* better, *manifested* (the Greek verb being that of the adjective *manifest*).

Verse 20.—*From the creation:* rather, *since*—but not, the invisible things of Him since the creation; but, are seen *since* the creation.——*By:* i.e. *by means of;* the creation, the glass in which are *clearly seen the eternal power and Godhead*, in themselves invisible.

Verse 21.—*Vain in their imaginations:* rather, their *thoughts*,—as the same word, διαλογισμοῖς, is translated 1 Cor. iii. 20,—in their notions, opinions, and reasonings concerning God. Wherein exactly did this *vanity* consist? In two things. (1) In the absence of a foundation in truth: and (2) in the positive absurdity of the idle fancies embodied in the Heathen mythology and worship.——*Their foolish heart was darkened:* not, as some have taken it, *their heart was darkened so as to become foolish*, which

would be an anti-climax; but their heart, perverted by their wilful folly in the abuse of their rational nature, was judicially darkened or blinded.

VERSE 23.—*Changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image:* rather, *exchanged the glory of the uncorruptible God, for an image; i.e.*, worshipped the image instead of the glory.

VERSE 24.—*Through:* rather, *in.* Their *lusts* were not the *cause* of their *uncleanness,* but the *state* in which they were left.——*To dishonour:* rather, *that their bodies might be dishonoured.*

VERSE 25.—*Changed the truth of God into a lie:* rather, exchanged the truth of God (the true God) *for* a *lie,* i.e. an empty idol, a thing of nought.——*More than the Creator:* rather, instead of the Creator, so as entirely to deprive Him of the honour due to Him.——*Who is blessed for ever. Amen.* This seems to be not simply a gush of pious feeling, but connected with a practice, common among Jews and Mahometans, of introducing a doxology (as if to purify the lips) when language has been cited which is, or is deemed to be, blasphemous. Thus in the Koran: "It becometh not God to beget a son. Glory be to Him" (Sura xix. 36); "Praise be to God, who hath not begotten a son, who hath no partner in his kingdom, nor any protector on account of weakness. And magnify Him by proclaiming his greatness" (Sura lxvii. 111); "Yet they say, The God of Mercy hath begotten issue from the angels. Glory be to Him! Nay, they are but his honoured servants" (Sura xxi. 26).

VERSE 26.—*Vile affections:* rather, *shameful lusts.* ——*Change into:* rather, *exchange for.*

VERSE 27.—*Error:* their lapse into idolatry and consequent uncleanness.

VERSE 28.—*Like:* rather, *think fit.*——*Reprobate:* i.e., *depraved.*——*Those things which are not convenient:* i.e., *abominable things.*

VERSE 31.—*Without understanding:* i.e., without discernment of moral good and evil.

VERSE 32.—The last stage of sin is to take pleasure in it for its own sake when seen in others, without the excuse of yielding to the solicitation of personal lust and passion. This is the climax which it often reaches in the old, who are hardened in vice, and have lost their relish for sensual enjoyment.

It is not to be supposed that in this dark picture of the Heathen world, St. Paul meant that all the Heathen were sunk in the same corruption; and that he was not fully aware that there was an infinity of gradations between the best and the worst, and that there were many whose lives were outwardly irreproachable and might have afforded a salutary example to many Christians; we need but remember the names of Aristides, Epaminondas, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, &c. Those who abandoned themselves to the grosser forms of vice and wickedness were undoubtedly comparatively the few. On the other hand, none of those who so offended had their hearts darkened so as to be unable to discern the difference between good and evil; and, therefore, it might be truly said of them, as in verse 32, that they knew the judgment, or, rather, the ordinance of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death. The doctrine of a future retri-

bution was generally received, as we know from Æschylus,—

Δρασάντι παθεῖν
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ,[1]

as well as from the descriptions, in Homer or elsewhere, of the details of the future punishment. At the same time, the death of which the Apostle here speaks is not simply the loss of mortal life, but death everlasting. CONNOP THIRLWALL.

ON THE CONTEST FOR THE BODY OF MOSES.

JUDE, *verse* 9.

That to us this contest between the Archangel and the Devil is exceedingly obscure is certain; although it was apparently not unfamiliar to the countrymen and contemporaries of Jude the brother of James. In considering this obscure passage we may take one of two lines.

We may, in the first place, treat it as a mere reference to a Jewish fable; and we may say that its origin must be found in some pious imagination of the Persian era, when Jewish thought became saturated with the angelology and demonology of the far East. This is, perhaps, more or less vaguely, the opinion of most educated laymen. I will simply say here, that it seems to me inconsistent with any solid belief in the Inspiration of Scripture, and creates, therefore, much more serious difficulties than it removes. We may, in the second place, accept as

[1] Æsch. *Χοηφόροι*, 305, 6.

a fact the occurrence alluded to, and endeavour to give some explanation of it which shall bring it into harmony with other parts of Revelation. I propose in this paper to examine briefly the ordinary explanation of this obscure reference, and then to place it in what seems to me its true connection. For the ordinary treatment of the subject I cannot do better than quote the words of the Bishop of Lincoln, in his great Commentary:

"The Archangel Michael, although contending even with a fallen angel, the leader of fallen angels, the Devil, and disputing with him concerning the body of Moses, which God had buried and concealed, *in order, as is probable, that it might not become an object of worship to the Israelites;* and which, it seems, the Devil desired to possess, in order that God's purpose in this might be frustrated, and that the mortal remains of this faithful servant of God *might be made to be an occasion of creature-worship to the Israelites*,—as the brazen serpent was made to be—and as the relics of holy men have been made in later times;—yet even against him," &c.

Now I venture to say that this supposition is altogether gratuitous; and I say so on the following grounds:—

Firstly, there is not a hint in Scripture that such was God's purpose, or such the devil's design; it simply says that God buried him, and that none ever knew the place of his sepulture. Had we nothing else to guide us, we should most reasonably infer that God's purpose was to shew special honour to his faithful servant, and to save him from the humiliation of having his sepulchre built by those whose fathers had tried and troubled and tempted him so sorely. Secondly, what is more important, there seems no reason to suspect the Jews of that day of any tendency to honour Moses overmuch:

they never had done so while he lived, most certainly; and they had in Joshua a leader much more to their mind (and to their need too) than Moses could have been. The real danger seems to have been lest the memory of Moses, and of all which he did and taught, should fade away entirely from the hearts of that fickle-minded race. Thirdly, what is most important, it is plain that to attribute any tendency to *this* kind of creature-worship to the Jews is an anachronism. There is no instance in the Old Testament of any such thing. They were under an almost irresistible fascination, which led them to worship the powers of Nature in any and every shape; even the smooth stones of the mountain torrent cast a dangerous spell over their minds. (Isa. lvii. 6.) But the cultus of dead men's bones and limbs, which forms so curious and, to us, repulsive a part of Romanism, was obviously quite foreign to their tone of mind. It is, indeed, however corrupt and mischievous, essentially Christian; and owes all its strength to a perverted sense of the intense sacredness of those bodies which have been in some eminent degree the shrines and habitations of the Holy Ghost. There was naturally no such feeling among the Jews, for whom a human corpse was associated only with wailing and sorrow of heart and legal defilement. The Levitical legislation, stamping the corpse of the highest and the noblest with the common reproach of uncleanness, added to the want of any *lively* hope of the life to come, left no standing-room for any such veneration as even we accord to the bodies of the faithful. Had there been any such tendency as the Commentators assume, the Jews

might have indulged it; they had the body, for instance, of Elisha, who must have seemed to the popular mind hardly less than Moses, and whose bones actually did work a miracle; but there is no hint that they ever paid it any honour. Indeed, this case seems decisive: for it is impossible to suppose that God would have encouraged an existing tendency to this form of creature-worship by permitting the touch of the prophet's bones to raise a dead man to life.

The case of the brazen serpent, adduced as a parallel, exactly points the contrast. Serpent-worship was a common form of idolatry then and after, and had, no doubt, a great attraction for the morbid and, so to speak, prurient development of religious instinct so pronounced in the Jews of Hezekiah's day; but, as I have said, the cultus of dead bodies had no place whatever, either among surrounding tribes or among the Israelites. If, therefore, we conclude that this alleged reason for the mysterious burial of Moses, and for the contest concerning it, is inconsistent with the facts of Jewish history and the tone of Jewish thought, can we say that the Scripture suggests any other reason? I think we can.

If we turn to the account given by St. Luke of the Transfiguration (ix. 29–33), we read that "there talked with him *two men*, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease," &c. Now, had it been the disembodied spirit of Moses which was brought thither, it would not have been called a "man;" it could not have spoken in the hearing of the Apostles, nor have been recognized by them as Moses. Indeed, the

narrative leaves no manner of doubt that Moses and Elijah were both there in the flesh, as their Lord Himself was; and only this gave any point to the wild proposal of St. Peter to build three tabernacles, one for each of them.

I wish to press this point, because it seems often to be shirked. I repeat, therefore, that the narrative is conclusive as to the fact of Moses and Elijah being there in the full reality of their human nature, even as Christ was. True, they were "in glory;" but so was He: their transfiguration, like his, was no denial of, but rather a distinct affirmation of, the reality of their bodily presence. And, so far as Elijah is concerned, this is exactly what we should have expected; for he was translated in the body, and it were hard to believe that *after* that translation he should have endured the pangs and nakedness of dissolution. Surely he, like Enoch, anticipated the happy fate of those of whom St. Paul says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Elijah, therefore, did but come from his secret abode, where, not "unclothed" but "clothed upon," he awaits the harvest of which he himself was a wondrous anticipation, ripened and garnered long before the time.

But how shall we explain that, not Elijah and Enoch, but Elijah and Moses, stood on the Mount of Transfiguration in human form and spake with human lips? For Moses died, and was buried. Yes; but it does not follow that he "saw corruption." For God Himself buried him, and the Archangel Michael watched over his body. Shall we not find *here* the secret of that mysterious strife? *here*, the

reason for that apparently aimless and unconnected allusion in the Epistle? There wanted a link between the two episodes, so far removed in time, so closely connected in meaning; between the sepulture in the Land of Moab, over against Beth-peor, and the re-appearance on the snow-clad peak of Hermon beneath the glittering stars.

Here is the link. He who is most holy, and will not pass over iniquity even in the best, had said that his servant should die and should not pass over with the people into the land of promise. And he died. But He that is most merciful, and rewardeth them that serve Him above all that they can ask or think—He suffered not his servant's body to see corruption; He set his angel guards to keep it from the powers of evil: and when the time came, and that greater Prophet whose advent Moses had foretold, then He gave him back his body, and in that body glorified He set him at last upon the sacred soil and bade him speak with Jesus of that more wondrous Exodus which was to be accomplished at Jerusalem. What could be more in keeping with the revealed ways of God?

But what part should Satan seek to play in this? Clearly this—that as death is the wages of sin, even in a saint, and as corruption is the very completion and complement of death, so has Satan an interest in the corruption of our mortal frames. He has, as it were, a lien upon them, by reason of sin; he lays his finger upon them, and they are loathsome, and decay. I do not deny, of course, that corruption, as a process of Nature, is both inevitable and beneficial; but, at the same time,

I maintain that it is ordained as part of the penalty of sin, and that Scripture teaches us to connect it with the agency of the Evil One.

Here, then, is the matter of dispute, the subject of contention, between Michael and the Devil. Fain would Satan see the mournful work of death completed upon the fallen hero of Israel, the almost faultless servant of God; but Michael knew that God had provided some better thing, some special reward even in this world, for that faithful servant: therefore he said, "The Lord rebuke thee."

RAYNER WINTERBOTHAM.

AN ANCIENT SOLUTION OF A MODERN PROBLEM.

ST. MATTHEW XII. 15–21.

Among the unsolved problems of the New Testament few, if any, recur more frequently to our thoughts than this: Why did the Lord Jesus habitually forbid those whom He had healed to blazon abroad the miracles of power and grace which He had wrought upon them? There are, no doubt, other problems far more important than this; but there are few which come back upon us so often. On page after page of the Gospel narratives we read that He straightly charged those whom He had healed to hold their peace, to tell no man, on no account to make Him known.

Many solutions of the problem have been proposed, which are good so far as they go; but, lacking authority, they also lack conclusiveness. Still, we listen to them with respect if they sound reasonable.

and many of them are perfectly reasonable. When, for example, we are told that Christ bade men hold their peace because He did not wish to provoke the hostility of the rulers of the Jews before his time was come; or, because those who had so newly come to Him were not competent as yet to bear witness to Him; or, because it was more for their spiritual health that they should silently reflect on the meaning of the wonders He had wrought than that they should publish them abroad; or, because it was better that they should save their strength for action and not fritter it away in mere talk:—we have nothing to object; we admit that any one of these solutions may be the true key to the problem, or that at least much may be said for any one of them. And yet, even if we accept them all, we are not satisfied. We do not feel that the question is closed. We expect to hear it re-opened at a future day, and think it highly probable that some larger and more conclusive answer to it will be found. And we do well to accept such answers as these with diffidence, even if they be our own: for no answer can be more than a provisional solution of the problem until the voice of Inspiration authoritatively end and crown the debate.

But is such an inspired solution to be had? It is; although, to our shame, it has long been overlooked. In the passage before us, St. Matthew gives an authoritative reply to the question which has often perplexed our thoughts. He tells us that once, when Jesus was followed by a great multitude, and had healed them all, He charged them that they should not make Him known; and this He did, affirms

the Evangelist, "*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet*, saying: *Behold my Servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the nations; he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets: a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking wick he shall not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory: and in his name shall the nations trust.*" This is St. Matthew's solution of the problem; and if we study it carefully we shall not only find one of the vexed questions of the Christian Scriptures laid to rest, we shall also gather from it a divine hope and comfort. His words unfold before us a glorious prospect—the ultimate victory of the single and righteous Will of God over all the impure and conflicting wills of men; they also assure us that, till that day of triumph break upon the world, we are led and taught and upheld by a Master the kindest, the gentlest, the most gracious men ever had.

Let us mark, then, (1) what St. Matthew's solution of the problem is; and (2) what comfort and hope it suggests for us and for all men.

I. According to St. Matthew, the Lord Jesus charged men not to make Him known *in order that* a prophecy of Isaiah's might be fulfilled. On Isaiah's prophetic soul, dreaming of things to come, there had dawned a vision of the elect and beloved "Servant" of God, of the ideal Man, Minister, Son of Jehovah (Isa. xlii.). To him it seemed that this elect or ideal Servant, come when and how He might, must be animated and clothed with the

Divine Spirit; that his supreme aim and object would be to establish right on an earth smitten and vexed with manifold intolerable wrongs; that He would pursue this end with a Divine simplicity, gentleness, patience,—not contending angrily for pre-eminence, not trumpeting forth his claims to homage in street and market-place, but binding up the bruised reed, fanning to flame the smoking wick; gradually, gently, but surely winning his way with men by force of love and meekness, until at last they would make his will their will with cheerful and unforced accord, and the eternal righteousness of God, as revealed in Him, would gain a complete victory over all the wrongs of time. This was the gracious yet august Figure which rose before the Prophet's mind as he strove to conceive what the ideal Minister of God must be like; and to this elect Servant he heard the voice of the Heavenly Majesty saying, "I, the Lord, have called thee to righteousness, that I may take hold of thy hand, and make thee the Light of the nations, to open the blind eyes, to bring prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness from the house of restraint." In short, the true Servant of God, elect and beloved, will be animated by the very spirit of God Himself; and therefore his work will be to bring back a divine righteousness to wronged and suffering men, and to make that righteousness the law of the whole earth. And the special "note," or characteristic of his ministry will be a stedfast gentleness, an unfailing patience which will not suffer Him to despair of any man, however weak and sinful; a holy tranquillity and simplicity which

will keep Him at the farthest remove from the passion, the ostentation, the rude and selfish violence of the man who seeks notoriety for himself rather than the welfare of those whose notice and applause he solicits.

Is not that a true ideal? does it not commend itself to our reason? If God be love, must not the ideal Servant of God—in St. Paul's expressive phrase, "truth it in love," *i.e.*, put the truth before men in winning, gentle, affectionate forms? If the proclamation of truth, the reign of righteousness, be his aim, will He not pursue that aim with a Divine gentleness and simplicity? How else can He be, and shew Himself to be, truly Divine? how else the chosen Minister, the beloved Son of the God who does not *force* Himself and his will upon us, but veils Himself behind the laws and forces of the universe, behind the natural sentiments and affections of the human heart, behind social influences and the kindnesses of friends; so that we have to discover Him, to find Him out, and to learn that we live, not by these natural ministries alone, but by the living quickening words which proceed from his mouth, and which give these natural ministries their vitality and efficacy?

Now this lofty prophetic ideal St. Matthew affirms to have been incarnated in the man Christ Jesus. *He* was the elect Servant, beloved of Heaven. On him the Spirit of God descended and abode. It was his task, his mission, to announce the Divine good-will to men, and to establish righteousness on the vexed and groaning earth. And here was the proof: He had the

distinctive note, or characteristic, of the ideal Minister. He did not strive, nor cry; his voice was not heard in the streets. He was no blatant champion fighting in a set field before myriads of spectators, and shouting as he fought. He was no loud-voiced tribune of the people "courting the most sweet voices" of the mob, posing himself in the eyes of the multitude and doing his good deeds to be seen of men,—strutting the stage, and ranting and mouthing out his incorruptible love of virtue, his resolve to see justice done. He was quiet, and calm, and gentle, as true greatness ever is. He condescended to men of low estate without "condescension." Nothing human was alien to Him,—no broken-down publican bruised with compunction for his treasons and extortions, no miserable harlot in whom the flame of pure love was all but quenched. Whoever needed Him was welcome to Him; the more they needed Him, the more welcome were they. So gentle was He, so inobtrusive and unostentatious, so far from craving the applause of men, that when the sick, the sinful, the outcast had found healing, forgiveness, virtue in Him, He charged them to tell no man of it. And here, in this modesty, this reticence, this divine simplicity, St. Matthew saw the characteristic manner of the elect Servant and beloved Son of God whom Isaiah had depicted.

So that *now*, whenever the question is raised, "Why did the Lord Jesus charge those whom He had healed and saved not to make Him known?" we have at our command an authoritative and inspired reply. It was because He was the ideal

Minister of God, the ideal and perfect Man and Servant and Son whom Isaiah foresaw. Or, to go to the full depth of the reply: it was because He was Divine; because, therefore, his works must be characterized by a Divine modesty and simplicity: because the Redeemer, like the Creator, of men must needs veil his glory, not flaunt it in the eyes of men; because all great forces are gentle, calm, gradual in their operation: because He came to be, not as the momentary lightning, which rends and slays and roars exultingly over the strokes with which it stabs the earth, but like the gentle friendly light which, though it comes so noiselessly and imperceptibly that it is long before it wakes us, nevertheless transfigures the face of the earth and sets in motion all the wheels of Nature and of human life.

II. We have to mark the suggestions of Hope and Comfort with which St. Matthew's solution of this problem is rife. Men groan under the burden of many sorrows. But if there be some that press upon us more sharply, there is none which lies upon us with a more constant and weary weight than the burden of this *unintelligible* world. We believe that God is good, and that He must therefore be causing all things to work together for the good of his creatures. We see that man is a creature of capable and well-nigh godlike faculties, with large discourse of reason, with a heart that easily melts into tenderness or flames into heroism. In some few favoured specimens of the race we see to what serene heights of dignity, goodness, serviceableness, peace, humanity may rise. And yet, for the most part, men are borne down into the very dust by a

throng of petty cares and carnal cravings, at war with each other, at war with themselves, their best faculties uncultivated, their purest affections seldom evoked: nay, so untoward are the present conditions of human life, that it is still true that much wisdom brings much sorrow with it, and our best affections are avenues through which the enemies of our peace deliver their most fatal assaults. To the great bulk of men life hardly seems worth having, in the eye of reason, and immortality appears but a perilous endowment, so steeped are they in misery and corruption, or so insensible to that which should fill them with misery and shame.

Yet what help is there? what prospect of relief? Finding their present conditions intolerable, the wiser and more aspiring sort of men have always fled for refuge to the future; they have run for shelter and relief into the Sanctuary of Hope. Poets and statesmen and prophets have vied with each other in depicting the golden close of the world's troubled story in an age of universal purity and concord and peace. Nor are their hopes altogether woven of such stuff as dreams are made of. The elect Servant of God, Christ the Saviour, came to make them real and true. From Him we learn, as also from the Prophets and Apostles, that the hopes of men have not deceived them. He has taught us to see the pure, tender, stedfast Will of God working in and through all the tangled mass of the impure, conflicting, hostile wills of men, and has assured us that in the end the will of God shall be done on earth even as it is in heaven.

And it is this secret of hope, for ourselves and for

the world at large, which is once more disclosed in the passage before us. Isaiah and Matthew combine to proclaim that Christ, the Beloved of God and man, has come into the world to shew "*judgment*" to the nations, and that He will not pause in his sacred task "*until he sends forth judgment unto victory.*" Now this word "judgment" has a history, and a history which compels us to read it in a sense far other than that in which it is commonly taken. As used by the Prophets and the Psalmists it is one of the many names for the law of God. The *mishpât*, or "judgment," which Christ came to announce to men, is the will of God viewed as the rule of human life. The word sets forth the absolute rightness, or righteousness, of that Will, and lays emphasis on the fact that it is quick with a judicial energy in virtue of which it is capable of executing itself, condemning and chastising the world that it may save the world from its sins. So that when we read of Christ that He came to shew "judgment" to the nations, we are to understand that He came to reveal the righteousness, or right will, of God to man, in order that they might no longer go about to establish their own righteousness, but might submit to the righteousness of God. And when we read that Christ will work on, unhasting and unresting, "until he send forth judgment unto victory," we are to understand that his righteousness will at the last prevail over all the unrighteousness of men, that the nations will submit to the pure will of God and make it their own.

This is our hope. Heaven is to come down to earth. God is to return and dwell with men. The

nations, saved from their self-will, their corruptions and conflicts and miseries, are to take sanctuary in Him, to find life and peace in Him. Men are not always to be in bondage to care and fear and sorrow because they are sinful and unclean. A day will come in which a great voice out of heaven will be heard proclaiming, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." And as this Voice from heaven dies away, there will rise a great shout, or song, from the nations of the saved,—"Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

But to most of us this hope commonly seems as distant as it is great. Now and then, perhaps, in our more raised and spiritual moods, we catch glimpses of it, and set our faces toward it, and some faint reflection of its splendour falls and kindles in our upturned faces. But, ordinarily, it is far away, dwarfed by distance, and sheds no sensible light of courage and cheerful anticipation into our souls. We want, we crave, a nearer refuge from the cares and miseries of life, from the thoughts that fly low and brood over the sins and degradations of the world. Is there, then, no present, no immediate comfort to be had? Yes, there is. For He, who is to lead forth "judgment unto victory," is even now "shewing judgment" to the nations. Christ did not cease from his work of redemption

when He went up on high, to resume it at some far distant day when He is to come again. He is still with us, and still carrying on his work, still teaching men the good-will of God, and inclining them to respond to it and adopt it. He is even now shewing that Will to us, and inviting us to make it our refuge, our sanctuary, our hope. No matter how sinful we have been, no matter how weak we are, no matter how many are the evil passions and habits with which we have to contend, Christ offers Himself to us as our Saviour and Friend. He comes with the halo of many peaceful victories round his brow. He has proved again and again that He is "able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by him." How many bruised reeds, trodden under foot of man, has He bound up, raised, and quickened into new life! How many smoking wicks, how many hearts in which the light of spiritual life seemed to have clean gone out, so that they had become an offence in the nostrils of the Pharisee, has He fanned into a clear and ardent flame! How many even of the basest and the vilest has his gentleness made great! And He is as accessible to-day, as meek, as gentle, as considerate, as quick to discern any faint single spark of true life as when, clothed in flesh, He dwelt among men. It is still true that He does not strive nor cry, nor lift up his voice in the streets, as one who would use men to win fame for Himself or to enhance his glory. He comes to us as gently and kindly as the light, to open our closed eyes on a new day of hopeful service, and tranquil activity, and peaceful rest. He comes to us in the secret places

of the soul when good thoughts arise within us, when we long to be better than we are, when we feel well-nigh hopeless of the deliverance from that which is wrong and base and hard, for which we nevertheless sigh. We may put Him to the proof at any moment; and the moment we do go to Him, this elect and beloved Son of God will give us power to become the sons of God and to make his will our will amid all the changes and conflicts of time.

S. COX.

THE VINDICTIVE PSALMS VINDICATED.

INTRODUCTORY.

If I may hope that the defence of the 109th Psalm, which appeared in The Expositor for November 1875, has commended itself to my readers, they will possibly be curious to learn whether any similar apology, or any apology at all, can be offered for the imprecations contained in other Psalms. They will probably be asking, "Can the fierce and vindictive expressions which disfigure other portions of the Psalter, in any case or cases, be identified as *quotations* — quotations by the Psalmists of the curses of their enemies?"

The answer to this question is, I had almost said unhappily, very simple. It is that, with the insignificant exceptions of Psa. xxii. 8 and Psa. xli. 8—in both of which instances, it will be observed, we have taunts or reproaches, rather than maledictions, and in both of which the reproachful words are distinguished as citations by our Authorized Version; and also with the exception of Psa. xli. 5, where the

citation, though not expressly acknowledged by the Authorized Version, is obvious,—there are no cases, except, of course, those which are stated to be reported speeches in the Original, where we can confidently say, "These are not the words of the Psalmist; they are the words of wicked men who hated him."

There is one passage indeed, and that precisely the passage which after Psa. cix. is most distressing, which is *patient* of this interpretation, viz., Psa. lxix. 27, 28. I should scruple to say that these anathemas *must* be a quotation; but one need have little hesitation in saying that we may legitimately hold them to be such. The 26th verse runs: "For those whom *thou* hast smitten have they persecuted, and to the sorrow of thy wounded ones do they speak." Then follow the imprecations: "Add iniquity unto their iniquity," &c. Is it not possible that these are the very words which, as the Psalmist has just been telling us, "they spoke to the sorrow of God's wounded ones"? I incline, on grounds which perhaps it would be wearisome to enumerate, to think that this is the most natural construction of the passage.

It is clear, then, that we cannot account for all, or indeed for many of the Imprecations, by pleading that they are citations. We must cast about, consequently, for other grounds on which to reconcile them with the moral sense and with the spirit of our just and beneficent religion. But, first, let us try to grasp the character and extent of the difficulty which we have to face.

The difficulty is this:—That in no less than

twenty-nine Psalms ;[1] in no less, that is to say, than twenty-nine Lyrics held by the Church of God to have been "given by inspiration of God," and allowed, even by those who would deny their inspiration, to be "full of all blessed conditions:" in so many of these, and frequently standing side by side with their most devout and gracious sentiments, are expressions which, by all the laws of language, we are bound to call *Imprecations:* that is to say expressions of the hope, the wish, the prayer, that some judgment, some punishment, some misfortune, may befall certain persons; while in more than fifty Psalms[2] we have, not Imprecations indeed, but *Comminations;*[3] that is to say, statements on the part of the writers of the Psalms of their belief that some judgment, some punishment, some misfortune, either has befallen or will befall certain persons, on account of their real or supposed misdeeds. The distinction between the two classes is obvious. The latter are declarations of what *will* happen in certain cases, and that whether the writer desires it or not: the former are petitions

[1] They are Psalms v. vii. x. xi. xii. xvii. xxviii. xxxi. xxxv. xl. xli. liv. lv. lvi. lviii. lix. lxviii. lxix. lxx. lxxi. lxxiv. lxxix. xciv. cxxix. cxxxix. cxl. cxli. cxliii. cxliv.

[2] Such are Psalms iii. v. xviii. xxi. xxxvi. xlviii. lii. liii. lv. lvi lviii. lxiii. lxiv. lxviii. lxxv. ci. cx. cxlix.

[3] The definitions are perhaps somewhat wide, and may possibly cover a few expressions which would not ordinarily be called either imprecatory or comminatory, but which must however be so designated, if the words are taken in their strict and literal significance. It seemed necessary to say this, in order to account for the large number of Psalms set down under each of these categories. It is not meant, of course, that nearly thirty Psalms are, in their general character, imprecatory (or that over fifty are comminatory), but that no less a number contain one or more imprecations.

addressed to God that some specific evil *may* happen to the writer's enemies, or to God's enemies, as the case may be. The moral difficulty presented by the former, consequently, is much greater than that which attaches to the latter. For while the Comminations are liable to the *suspicion* of vindictiveness; while they countenance the idea that the writer was "glad at calamities," and "rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated him," inasmuch as he viewed the impending evil, not merely without regret, but with positive approval, and sometimes with a sort of exultation; the Imprecations, without proof to the contrary, have every stamp and token of malevolence. In the former case the author may or may not have been solicitous for the calamity which he foretells: in the latter, he *must* have been solicitous for it, for he prays for it. But the difference between the two classes of expressions, and consequently the difficulties which they respectively present to us, will be best exhibited by a few examples, which perhaps are all the more necessary inasmuch as both Imprecations and Comminations differ considerably among themselves in their range and intensity. For a reason which will be obvious hereafter, I have selected such specimens of either class as have a certain correspondency and community of idea with examples of the other class. The translation is in every case that of Professor Perowne's Commentary.

Imprecations.	Comminations.
"O God, break their teeth in their mouths; the jaw teeth of the young lions wrench out, O Jehovah."—Psa. lviii. 6.	"Thou hast smitten all mine enemies on the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly."—Psa. iii. 7.

Imprecations.	Comminations.
"Of thy loving kindness, cut off mine enemies and destroy all the adversaries of my soul."—Psa. cxliii. 12.	"Mine enemies also thou hast made to turn their backs before me, so that I destroyed them that hate me."—Psa. xviii. 40. (*Cf.* Psa. xliv. 5.)
"O that thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God."—Psa. cxxxix. 19.	"Evil shall slay the wicked."—Psa. xxxiv. 21.
"Pour out thy fury on the heathen which know thee not; . . . and render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom."—Psa. lxxix. 6, 12.	"O daughter of Babylon . . . happy shall he be that layeth hold of thy little ones and dasheth them against the rock." — Psa. cxxxvii. 9.
"Let destruction come upon him at unawares, and let his net which he hath hidden catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall."—Psa. xxxv. 8.	"Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days."—Psa. lv. 23. [1]

Now what shall we say to such expressions as these? For one thing is certain, that we must say something. They call for explanation, for justification. We cannot shut our eyes to them, or if *we* can, others cannot and will not. To many persons, and those not the least devout, the Imprecatory and Comminatory Psalms have occasioned exquisite distress. They say they wish to believe them to be inspired, and yet they perceive in them a spirit manifestly alien to the spirit of Christ. They say they appear to them to be vindictive, malevolent, truculent. They say they cannot frame their lips to pronounce them. In fact, they scarcely know what to think of them, except to wish that the Bible "were well rid of them." But others, the chartered enemies of our religion, are at no loss what to make

[1] Compare also Psa. lvi. 7 with Psa. xxxvi. 12; Psa. lxix. 22–28 with Psa. xxxvii. 13, 20; Psa lxxxiii. 11, 13 with Psa. cxlix. 6–8; Psa. cxl. 10 with Psa. cxx. 3, 4.

of them. They make a capital of unbelief out of them. They point to them as a sufficient reason for rejecting the Volume of which they form a part. They parade them before us, and ask, "Can this be the voice, or can this have the sanction, of the Supreme Goodness? Can the Eternal Love approve of such hatred, and venom, and rank uncharitableness, as some of these expressions display?" The Vindictive Psalms, then, there can unhappily be no doubt, are a real difficulty: they are a weapon in the hands of the infidel: they are a stumbling-block in the path of the Christian.[1] And as such, we are bound, if we can, to vindicate them. If a good account of them can be given,—of which many persons profess to despair,—it is a sacred duty to produce it. And this is what, in subsequent issues of THE EXPOSITOR, I shall hope to do.

I say in *subsequent* issues, for the remainder of this article must be devoted to a consideration of certain solutions of the difficulty which have been proposed by various divines, some of which, even at the present day, are very generally received as sufficient, but which I cannot but regard as untenable or inadequate. I am not at liberty to pass them by, because one or other of them almost invariably finds acceptance with students of Scripture, and because to leave them unchallenged would be to cut the ground from under my own feet. I shall notice three such, the Futuristic, the Prophetical, and the Condemnatory hypotheses. With

[1] See Dr. Hessey's "Boyle Lectures," 2nd Series, pp. 13–23, where testimonies to this effect are cited from Thomas Fuller, Dr. Chalmers, and others.

regard to the two first mentioned, it is true, my task will be almost one of slaying the slain; for they have been dealt with already by several writers, though not, it has seemed to me, as summarily and conclusively as they have deserved. Be that as it may, they still survive in popular estimation. The third, however, has been but recently propounded, and, so far as I know, has not yet received any reply.

By the *Futuristic* interpretation I intend, of course, the solution suggested, or advocated, by such writers as Bishops Horne and Horsley and Dr. Henry Hammond. This was for a long time the favourite explanation of the imprecations—of the comminations it takes no account; and it still has its advocates. It proceeds on the supposition that the imprecations have no necessary existence in the Original, and only appear in our English Bibles through the inadvertence of our translators, who have rendered certain Hebrew verbs as imperatives, or optatives, when they might with equal, if not greater, propriety have presented them to us as futures indicative. For example, where in Psa. lxix. 22, we read, "Let their table become a snare, . . . let their eyes be darkened," &c., Dr. Hammond would render, "Their table *shall be* for a snare," "their eyes *shall be* darkened." So in Psa. cix. 13, "Let his posterity be cut off," Bishop Horsley would translate, "His posterity *shall be* cut off." Now this system of translation, if it could be admitted, might do something to *reduce* the difficulty. It would at any rate convert a large number of imprecations into comminations, *i.e.*, it would transform

prayers into predictions, and so acquit the authors of these Psalms of having desired and implored God to inflict the punishments which they specify. But this translation is *not* admissible. Hebrew grammar absolutely forbids it. For though in Hebrew the optative is formed out of the future, yet it is a special and distinct form thereof, an apocopated form, known to grammarians as the jussive future, and frequently, though not always, easily distinguishable, orthographically, from the ordinary future.[1] It is so in the instances just mentioned.[2] But, secondly, even if this translation were legitimate, there would still remain a large number of imprecations in which it would afford us no relief whatever; all those imprecations, namely, in which the Hebrew imperative proper is used. Such a passage is Psa. lxix. 24, "Pour out thine indignation upon them," where the verb (שְׁפֹךְ) is a strict imperative, and cannot possibly be manipulated into a future. Another such passage is Psa. lviii. 6, "Break their teeth," &c.; and these two are but examples of many more. And, finally, even if we were justified in turning all these optatives or imperatives into futures, all these imprecations, *i.e.*, into comminations, what shall we say of some of the comminations

[1] See Gesenius's Grammar, ed. Rödiger, pp. 75, 189.

[2] It is not meant to be denied here that there are some cases where the imperative of the Authorized Version might be more correctly rendered as a future indicative (as, *e.g.*, Psa. vi. 10), or even as a past (*e.g.*, Psa. cix. 17, 18). But, on the other hand, there are passages where our translators have employed indicatives, but where the optative or imperative is plainly demanded by the Original. I may mention as examples Psa. xi. 6, "Upon the wicked *may he rain*" (יַמְטֵר); Psa. xii. 3, "*May* the Lord *cut off*" (יַכְרֵת); Psa. cxxxix. 19, "O that thou *wouldst slay*" (אִם־תִּקְטֹל), &c.

themselves, as, *e.g.*, Psa. lviii. 10, or Psa. cxxxvii. 9? The Futurition hypothesis, consequently, must be for ever abandoned as both untenable and inadequate.

A second system of interpretation, the Allegorical or Prophetical, lands us in equal, if not greater, difficulties. By writers of this school—and nearly all the Fathers were of this school—the imprecations are justified as expressions which find their mark and fulfilment in the enemies of Christ, or in our own spiritual enemies.[1] For example, in Psa. lxix. 21, they find these words, "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." They know from the New Testament (St. John xix. 28) that these words were somehow predictive or descriptive of the sufferings of the Redeemer. They know, too, that the whole Psalm is generally esteemed to be Messianic. Accordingly, when they find in the verses following the 21st a series of imprecations, they conclude that these imprecations apply to the enemies of Christ, to those who gave Him "gall for meat and vinegar to drink." But how this interpretation solves the difficulty, I profess that I am unable to see. For, not to insist on the sheer absurdity of applying all the imprecations of all the Psalms—and *such* imprecations!—to the enemies of our blessed Lord, or to our own spiritual foes, we find ourselves suddenly confronted by this dilemma: Either the Psalmist, in this and other similar Psalms, describes his own bodily and mental sufferings, refers to real personal enemies, and contemplates men then living in his

[1] This latter was Dr. Arnold's view.

curses—these sufferings being typical of Christ's sufferings, these enemies of Christ's enemies, these contemporaries of Christ's crucifiers; or the Psalm is purely allegorical, purely and exclusively prophetical of the sufferings, enemies, words, &c., of our Lord. Plainly, if any Psalm, or any passage of Scripture whatsoever, is prophetical of Christ, it is prophetical of Him in one or other of these senses. Then, I submit that, in whichever sense you take this particular Psalm,—for we will try the theory by one instance chosen at haphazard,—the difficulty presented by these imprecations, whatever it may be, is not lessened, but is enormously increased. Do you say, for example, that the Psalmist primarily contemplates his own personal enemies in his curses and at the same time speaks prophetically of the crucifiers of JESUS? Then I reply that you have more than doubled the difficulty; for now you have not only to account for the Psalmist's real imprecations upon real enemies, which of course is the original problem, but you have also to encounter the superadded difficulty of his cursing, in the persons of these real enemies, the unborn enemies of our blessed Lord. Or, do you say, on the other hand, that the whole Psalm is a prophecy *pur et simple*;[1] that the writer, speaking by the Spirit of God, had from first to last the passion of Christ in view? In that case, not to speak of the absurdity of regarding a Psalm which is so manifestly autobiographical as this is, as an allegory; apart from the difficulty, too, of interpreting it throughout in a mys-

[1] See, *e.g.*, Phillips, "Introduction to Commentary on the Psalms," p. lxix.

tical and non-natural sense, you have now to face this tremendous problem: You have to account for these imprecations proceeding from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ! For if it be Christ, be it observed, who is speaking by the mouth of David in verse 21; if the words, "they gave me vinegar to drink," &c., be his, and only his, then it must be Christ who is speaking in verse 22, *seqq.*, for these verses are obviously a continuation of verse 21; they are parts of one speech by one and the same speaker. It is Christ, then, who says, "Let their table become a snare; . . . let their eyes be darkened; . . . make their loins continually to shake," &c. Yes, it is the Fount of all mercy and compassion, it is He who, "when he suffered, he threatened *not*," that, according to this theory, pronounced these maledictory words. Now, it may be difficult to justify such words in the mouth of David, or any of the Psalmists, but to suppose them—I will not say to justify them—in Christ's gentle lips is altogether impossible. It is impossible if for no other reason, yet for this, that we happen to know what his prayer was for his crucifiers, a prayer uttered too, it is believed, about the very time when they gave Him vinegar to drink; and it was—*not*, "Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them" (verse 24), much less, "Add iniquity unto their iniquity" (verse 27), but, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

We see, then, that the attempt to defend the imprecations on the ground that they are Messianic and prophetic utterly breaks down the moment it

is fairly tested. The other view, that they may be used as imprecations against our spiritual foes, apart from the fact that it leaves the original difficulty—the difficulty that the imprecations were primarily directed against palpable enemies, enemies of flesh and blood—untouched, strains the language of the Psalms to such a degree as to justify us in summarily dismissing it as fanciful and unworthy of serious consideration.

I now come to examine the third theory, the theory which, for want of a better name, I have ventured to call the Condemnatory. I refer to the ingenious and original defence of the Imprecatory Psalms recently put forth by Dr. (now Archdeacon) Hessey.[1] It is impossible to do full justice to this view in the limited space at my command; but, briefly stated, it amounts to this. That these imprecations are unjustifiable and reprehensible, not only when judged by the standard of the New Testament, but also when tested by that of the Old; that the instruction which the Psalmists had received, condemns what they said (p. 46), that the imprecations are "unrestrained expressions," and improper expressions —"impatient, envious, and revengeful" are some of Dr. Hessey's words—"of the feelings of their respective writers" (p. 45); that they are expressions which the writers themselves "in their more tranquil and dispassionate moments would be

[1] In the "Boyle Lectures" for 1872. It is perhaps only fair to Dr. Hessey to state that he appears to put forth this theory, not as unassailable, but only as being "liable to fewer objections than any of the other theories with which he is acquainted." Preface, p. xii.

inclined to retract" (p. 60); that, either in the Imprecatory Psalm itself, or in contiguous Psalms, we have "unequivocal proofs of the Psalmists' resipiscence" (p. 76); that we are no more called upon to approve of all the *words* of the Psalmists than of all their *acts* (p. 54); that, though the Psalms are inspired, and though, in the comminatory passages, the Psalmist speaks in God's name, in the imprecatory passages his language is of himself and not of God (p. 61); that these imprecatory portions may nevertheless be said to be inspired in the sense that it was inspiration "led the writers to put their feelings on record just as they had arisen, that it quickened their memories to recall them and their conscientiousness to prevent their modifying the description of them" (p. 64): and, finally, that it is for the "spiritually disciplined mind of the peruser of their compositions" to decide "when the Psalmists were speaking of themselves and when not" (*ib.*).

Now, while fully recognizing the conspicuous ingenuousness of this interpretation and the great ability displayed in its support, I am nevertheless unable, for the following reasons, to accept it:

First, it appears to me—and I hope I write with all the deference due to Dr. Hessey's superior learning and high reputation—to be a desperate remedy; it makes, as I cannot but think, not only needless but inadvertently dangerous concessions. By embracing this theory we surrender to the enemy positions which are by no means untenable, and which they will not be slow to occupy and use against ourselves. For, of course, it will be said,

"If the Psalms, the most pious and spiritual portion of the Old Testament, the portion where, if anywhere, we might fairly look for the marks of Divine Inspiration,—if *these* are disfigured by passages charged with 'envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness,' what certainty can we have as to the rest of the Volume, what warrant that any part of it has come from God? Besides, where are we to draw the line? how are we to know *when* the Psalmist is speaking 'of himself' and when 'in the name of God.'" "You tell us indeed," it will be said, "that the comminations are the voice of God, the imprecations the voice of the Psalmist; but surely that distinction is hardly well founded, for we observe that many of the imprecations are clearly but the echoes of the comminations. The Psalms are not few in number where the writer both prays God to inflict some punishment and also predicts that He will inflict it. Who is to say that the prediction is right, and the prayer wrong?" Moreover, if the Psalms contain expressions and prayers penned by their inspired writers which are thoroughly unjustifiable, they lose to a large extent their value for us. They are of value to us principally, though of course by no means exclusively, as patterns of devotion, as models and as vehicles for prayer and praise. It was for this reason, I take it, because they are "prayer-songs" and "praise-songs," not merely unexceptionable in character but also every way imitable, that they were collected into one volume under the title of the "Book of Praises." But if they contain vindictive prayers, prayers which never can be

and never could be justifiable, it is plain that, apart from the difficulty of finding out where they are and where they are not, models of devotion, to some extent they cease to be models at all. And, futhermore, if we allow that certain parts of this Hymnal—and those not easily definable—are of no authority, can this admission fail to impair the authority of the other parts? The Book of Proverbs is a didactic book. It professes to teach morality. Suppose we discovered amongst its precepts some which inculcated dishonesty or immorality; what should we say of the book as a whole? Would not both its value and its authority be thereby greatly lessened? And if it be prayers which are immoral instead of precepts, is the case at all changed? I cannot but regard this concession, therefore, as fraught with the most perilous consequences.

But, quite apart from the question of consequences, I believe this concession to be perfectly needless and uncalled for. For I cannot allow for a moment that the Imprecatory Psalms, judged by a just standard, are indefensible. I am prepared to accept them, and I hope to vindicate them. I hope to prove that, so far from being "condemned by the instruction which the Psalmists had received," they are the natural results and embodiments of that instruction; that, so far from being reprehensible, they are, when rightly understood, commendable and even in some sense imitable.

But if I find myself at issue with this scheme in its conclusion, I am equally so with the arguments by which it is supported. One of these is

the statement (upon which apparently Dr. Hessey lays some stress) that the Psalmists were themselves conscious that in giving utterance to these imprecations they had been carried away by their own feelings, and that in their calmer moments they would have wished to retract their words, and would most probably have retracted them, had not the hand of Inspiration held them back; and that the same invisible Hand guided them, instead of wiping out what they had written, to supply a corrective, a "proof of resipiscence," either in the same Psalm or in contiguous Psalms. Now this assertion, I cannot but think, is wholly destitute of proof. We have, so far as I know, no evidence at all that the Psalmists had any misgivings, either at the time they penned their imprecations or subsequently, that they were overstepping the bounds of charity and religion. It seems never for a moment to have occurred to them that such imprecations were otherwise than lawful and right. By whatever other motives they may have been actuated, they appear to have been possessed with the firm belief that they were doing God service, or at least acting in perfect accord with the Divine will and purpose, in praying for judgment upon their enemies. I find the proof of this in the following facts: First, that in Psalm vii.—a Psalm which, by the way, is universally allowed to be Davidic—the writer utters the sternest anathemas *against himself*, anathemas precisely similar to those which he elsewhere employs against others, providing he has acted, or should act, as they have done. Secondly, that in Psa. cxxxix. 21, the author distinctly implies that he considers it a religious duty to hate those

who hate God, "to hate them with a perfect hatred" and "to count them his enemies." Thirdly, that the imprecations are, with few exceptions, prayers, appeals to God to wreak the vengeance which the writer desired; prayers, too, uttered in evident sincerity and in full confidence that they would be heard and answered: and, consequently, that if the Psalmist subsequently relented and regretted his prayer, his proper course would manifestly have been, not to content himself with an expression of resipiscence, but to cancel his prayer; for until cancelled it would remain in force; it would go on, so to speak, crying out for vengeance. And, lastly and chiefly, that everywhere, as I have already hinted, we find imprecations which are merely the echoes of preceding comminations, and comminations which afford a warrant for succeeding imprecations. It may not be amiss to take a few examples in addition to those which may be found on pp. 30, 31. In Psa. vii. 6 we read (Perowne's translation), "Arise, O Jehovah, in thine *anger;* lift up thyself against the wrath of mine adversaries," &c. Such is the prayer. In verses 11–13 we find its analogue, "God is a righteous judge, and a God who is *angry* every day. If a man will not turn, he whetteth his sword, he hath bent his bow and made it ready. Yea, for that man he hath made ready the weapons of death; his arrows he maketh fiery arrows." So that the Psalmist here predicts that God *will* do all that he has just before *prayed* Him to do. The imprecation, *i.e.*, marches *pari passu* with the commination. So also in Psa. lv. 15, "Let death come suddenly upon them, let them go down into the unseen world alive." This is the prayer. And here is the prediction (verse 23),

"But thou, O God, shalt bring them down to the pit of destruction; bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." Again, we ask, What material difference is there between the two? The first is a prayer for the sudden death of his enemies; the second, a declaration that their doom will be according to his prayer. A still more striking instance may be found in Psa. liv. 5, where, within the compass of one verse, we have a commination, "He will requite the evil [of seeking to destroy the Psalmist] to mine adversaries," and in the next clause its exact imprecatory equivalent, "In thy truth destroy thou them." The writer of this Psalm, again, must be acquitted of the charge of having been carried away by his feelings and of having penned what subsequent reflection would condemn; for not only does the same verse which contains the imprecation assure us that its prayer *will* be granted, but the concluding verse of the Psalm assumes that it *has* been granted: "And upon mine enemies hath mine eye seen [its desire]." Here, again, no one, I imagine, can seriously maintain that while the two comminations are right, the imprecation, spoken in the same breath, is wrong, or that the first half of verse 5 was inspired of God, while the second was the unrestrained and uninspired utterance of the man.[1] It is clear, therefore, that while we have no evidence to prove that the Psalmists ever corrected or disclaimed their imprecations, they have repeatedly, and that in the

[1] Compare also Psa. v., verse 10 with verses 5, 6; Psa. x., verses 15 and 16; Psa. cxxix., verse 4 with verse 5; Psa. cxl., verse 9 with verse 11.

most practical and striking manner, confirmed and justified them. And I may add here that, so far from finding in *contiguous* Psalms proofs of relenting, we not unseldom find in them comminations which ratify and confirm the imprecations complained of. In Psa. xxxv. 5, 6, *e.g.*, we read, "Let them be as the chaff before the wind, and the angel of Jehovah thrusting them. Let their way be darkness and exceeding slipperiness," &c. I find a comminatory parallel to the first clause of verse 5 in Psa. xxxvii. 20 (*cf.* also Psa. i. 4), to the first clause of verse 6 in Psa. lxxiii. 18, and Psa. ix. 3, and to the second clause of both verses in Psa. xliv. 5. Again in Psa. lviii. 10, we have an expression, which, though not an imprecation, sounds strangely vindictive: "The righteous shall rejoice that he hath beheld the vengeance, his footsteps will he wash in the blood of the wicked." But in Psa. lxviii. 23, a very similar sentiment is found in the mouth of Almighty God Himself, "The Lord hath said . . . that thou mayest wash thy foot in blood, that the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion from the enemy." Now these parallels, which might be multiplied to an indefinite extent, prove, I think, conclusively, that the Psalmists did *not* pen their imprecations in moments of passion, and did *not* repent of them afterwards; they prove that they wrote them deliberately and advisedly, never doubting for a moment that what they wrote was just and right and acceptable to God. Whatever we may think of their words, then, there can hardly, one would think, be two opinions as to the terrible earnestness of those who penned them.

The next position of Dr. Hessey's which demands

notice is this. He says (p. 54), "They [the Psalmists] were men, David, for instance, who did many *acts* which our moral sense cannot approve. Is there any reason why we should be called upon to approve all their *words?*" I venture to think that there *is* a reason, and it is this: That an inspiration is claimed for their words, or at least for David's words, in Scripture, which is nowhere claimed for his acts. It is claimed by David for himself (2 Sam. xxiii. 2). It is claimed for him by our blessed Lord (Matt. xxii. 43); by St. Peter (Acts i. 16); and, by the whole band of the Apostles (Acts iv. 25). And, lastly—and this surely is conclusive not only on the point in question, but as against Dr. Hessey's theory generally,—an inspiration, or, what is the same for my purpose, a propriety, is claimed for him by St. Paul with respect even to some of his *imprecations*, the very imprecations indeed of Psa. lxix. 22, 23, to which reference has been so often made: "And David saith," we read in Rom. xi. 9, "Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway." Surely these scriptures, among others, prove that David's words, *his curses among the rest*, have received a Divine imprimatur such as is nowhere accorded to his deeds. And in the face of these testimonies should we not do well to pause before we speak of the sweet Psalmist's words as "proud and self-justifying," as "impatient, envious, and revengeful"?

I have but one remark more to make on this hypothesis. Dr. Hessey admits (p. 71) that so far

as we know "the Jews did not take offence at the imprecatory passages in the Psalms." But one cannot help feeling that, according to his theory, they ought to have done so, and *would* have done so. If these same passages violate the precepts of Judaism, if they are out of harmony with the spirit of the Old Testament (as Dr. Hessey maintains), is it not almost certain that the Jews would have remarked it and resented it? We know that the sharp-sighted Rabbis seized upon the apparent discrepancy between the statements of Ezekiel (chap. xviii. 4, 20) and that of the Decalogue (Exod. xx. 5), and long deliberated whether the former should not on this account be excluded from the canon. Can we think that the imprecations of a book, which more frequently perhaps than any other was in their hands and on their lips, if they were really in conflict with "the instruction which they had received," would have escaped their scrutiny? I find, then, in their acquiescence in them, and, above all, in the acquiescence in them of the Son of Man, a confirmation of the opinion (to which I am also led by a comparison of these passages with the denunciations of the prophets and with other portions of the Old Testament) that the Imprecatory Psalms are by no means unaccordant with the genius of the older Dispensation. And I see in this an additional and final reason for rejecting the hypothesis we have now been considering, a hypothesis the fundamental postulate of which is that the Vindictive Psalms stand condemned even by the very Revelation of which they form a part.

JOSEPH HAMMOND.

THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

IV.—THYATIRA. (*Revelation* ii. 18–29.)

LITTLE as we know of the general history of this Church in the apostolic age, it has at least one point of contact with the record of the life and labours of St. Paul. The purple-seller of the city of Thyatira, who went with other women to the place where prayer was wont to be made, to the oratory by the river-side at Philippi, and "whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul" (Acts xvi. 14), is among the most familiar figures in St. Luke's history of the mission-work of the Church. The facts that connect themselves with that mention of her name are also so generally known, that it will not be necessary to do more than briefly refer to them.

(1) Thyatira, situated geographically, as it stands in the order of the Messages, between Pergamos and Sardis, owed, if not its origin, yet its importance, to the fact of its being one of the Macedonian colonies founded by Alexander the Great after his conquest of the Persian Empire. As such, it was natural that it should, even after the lapse of three centuries, have many links that connected it with the mother country, and of this the presence of Lydia at Philippi may fairly be taken as an instance. (2) Inscriptions, the date of which is referred to the period between Vespasian and Caracalla, shew that the city contained many corporate guilds, which were united together by common

pursuits and religious rites, and that of these the guild of dyers was one of the most prominent. That art was indeed common to many of the Asiatic cities, and the commercial fame of Miletus in particular mainly rested on it; but of all these, Thyatira was the only one that had any connection with Macedonia. When we meet with Lydia at Philippi, she is already "one that worshipped God," a half-proselyte, *i.e.*, to Judaism; and we may reasonably infer from this the presence of a Jewish element, more or less influential, among the population of the city from which she came. The inhabitants seem indeed to have presented, from the names that appear on their monuments, a greater mingling of races than was commonly to be found, and included Macedonians, Italians, Asiatics, and Chaldæans. The chief object of their cultus was Apollo, worshipped as the Sun-God, under the Macedonian name of Tyrinnas.

It has been suggested by Dean Blakesley here, as before in the case of Smyrna, that the special words by which the Lord of the Churches describes Himself were determined by the character of the worship just referred to. He assumes that there was a statue of Apollo, of gold and ivory, or of wood or marble richly gilt; that this shone with a dazzling brightness, and that the "eyes like a flame of fire and the feet like fine brass" were meant to present the image of the Lord of the Churches as yet more glorious and terrible. Ingenious as the conjecture is, it has, I believe, nothing but its ingenuity to commend it. The imagery had been already used without reference to any local

colouring, and a reason for this special application of it may be found in the aspects of stern sovereignty which marks the whole Message. The feet of *chalcolibanus* shall crush the enemies of God as though they were the vessels of a potter.

The special notes of praise assigned to the Church of Thyatira correspond in a very marked degree with those which we find prominent also in that of the Philippians. Loving ministrations, patient endurance, warm-hearted faith, the more feminine graces of the perfect Christian character are dominant in both. It has been held by not a few writers (notably by Canon Lightfoot) that this characteristic of the Philippian converts was, in part, owing to the continued influence of the first European proselyte in that Church. If we remember that she came from Thyatira, and not improbably returned to it after a season, it is at least interesting to trace there also the same type of character as having been developed possibly under the same influence. And there were no signs of any falling off in this respect. The "last works" were "more than the first." What was wanted was that these graces should be balanced by others of a more masculine type, by righteous zeal against evil, by the exercise, when necessary, of the power to judge and to condemn. Here also the prayer of one who knew what the Church needed would have been that their "love might abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phil. i. 9).

We cannot enter on the words which follow without noticing the strange reading, not "that woman," but "thy wife, Jezebel" (*τὴν γυναῖκα σου*), which would

force upon us the conclusion that the work of the Angel, or Bishop, of the Church of Thyatira was thwarted by one who ought to have been his helpmate in it; that she had become tainted with the teaching of the followers of Balaam, and claimed as a prophetess an authority that over-ruled her husband's. I cannot set aside that reading on account of the strangeness of the picture thus presented to us, for truth is often stranger than fiction.[1] And on the principle, which has become almost an axiom in textual criticism, that the more difficult reading is probably the true one, this, commended as it is by some of the highest MSS., may well claim admission into the text. We can understand the deliberate suppression of a fact so startling. It is hard to understand the deliberate insertion of a word that would create so great a difficulty. On the other hand, it must be remembered that there is hardly any limit to be set to the blunders, pure and simple, of transcribers, and that the pronoun which creates

[1] If we receive this rendering we find (as Dr. Wordsworth has pointed out) a singular parallel in the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippian Church (c. xi.). There also the influence of women, at first, as we have seen, an element for good, had become the source of evil; and the wife of a presbyter named Valens is mentioned as having encouraged him in his transgressions. Strangely enough, too, the transgression is like in kind to that with which the Message to Thyatira deals. We have indeed only the Latin text of this part of the Epistle, and there we read: "Moneo itaque vos, ut abstineatis ab avaritiâ et sitis casti, et veraces. . . . Si quis non abstinuerit ab avaritia, ab idololatria coinquinabitur." The "avaritia" of the Latin corresponds, however, in all probability, to the Greek *πλεονεξία*, and that word, as in 1 Thess. iv. 5, and probably in 1 Cor. v. 10, was used in a secondary sense, as implying the lawless lust which was regardless of the rights of others. The union of the "avaritia" with "idololatria" almost forces this meaning upon us, and so presents the two as being in as close an alliance at Philippi as at Thyatira.

the perplexity is wanting in at least one (the Sinaitic MS.) of the first-class authorities.

On the whole, then, it seems best to deal with the passage, in any case sufficiently startling, without the additional element of strangeness which this reading gives it. On the other hand, I cannot accept the view taken by Alford and others, that "the woman Jezebel" represents, not a person, but a sect. Everything in the description has, if I mistake not, a distinctly individualizing character, and as such it throws light on some interesting social questions connected with the history of the Apostolic Church.

It lay in the nature of the Pentecostal gift that the powers which it conferred were not confined to one sex any more than to one class or race. Daughters as well as sons were to prophesy; the Spirit was to be poured on the "handmaids" as well as the "servants" of the Lord. (Acts ii. 17–18.) In Palestine, doubtless, the exercise of these gifts would be restricted by what had become, in spite of the older recollections of Deborah and Huldah, the traditional position of women in the religious life. It was not likely that a woman would be bold enough to speak in a synagogue where all of her own sex were screened off from seeing or being seen. In Greek-speaking countries, on the other hand, familiar with the thought of Sibyls and Pythian priestesses and damsels like that at Philippi with a spirit of divination, the true gift would more readily find a sphere of action, and would be more exposed, on the one hand, to the excitement and ecstasy which were among the incidents of its working; and, on the

other, to the rivalry of a counterfeit inspiration, morbid in its nature, presenting phenomena of startling extravagance and easily enlisted in support of the wild imaginations which were the germs of heresy. Traces of that extravagance we meet with in the Church of Corinth. Women had appeared in the public gatherings of the Church, and had "prophesied" with their faces unveiled, casting aside that which, both in the Jewish and Greek code of social ethics, was the symbol of womanly reserve. (1 Cor. xi. 5-10.) At first, it would seem, St. Paul had been content to reprove any manifestation of the prophetic power that was accompanied by so flagrant a disregard of the principles which, then as always, were the foundation of the rules of conventional decorum. But second thoughts (I do not think it irreverent to attribute second thoughts even to an Apostle) led him to the conclusion that the risks of abuse were so great that it was better to restrain the practice which was so liable to them; and accordingly, both in a later Chapter of the same Epistle (1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35) and in the injunctions which he left as his last bequest to the Asiatic Churches (1 Tim. ii. 11, 12), he laid down the rule that women were to be "silent" in all assemblies of the Church at which men were present, and to confine the exercise of their gifts to the work of teaching their own sex. We know too little of the conditions under which the four daughters of Philip the Evangelist prophesied at Cæsarea (Acts xxi. 8) to be able to say whether this was an exception to St. Paul's rule. It is probable enough that it was only in the privacy of their own home, or surrounded

by female disciples, that they gave utterance to the words which came from their lips, instinct with a divine power; it is possible that their character as "virgins" (*i.e.*, not merely unmarried women, but consecrated to a ministerial life) gained for them exceptional privileges; it is possible, lastly, that the Apostolic Churches were not bound by any uniform code of rules and rubrics, and that that of Cæsarea had not as yet adopted the regulation which was binding on the Churches founded by St. Paul.

What we have to deal with, in any case, in the Church of Thyatira is the assumption, on the part of some conspicuous woman, of the character of a prophetess, supported by the phenomena that simulated inspiration, and that her utterances were used to support the twofold errors of the Nicolaitanes and the followers of Balaam, "to teach and to seduce" the servants of Christ "to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." The name Jezebel, the representative of the Zidonian worship which had tainted the life of Israel with its impurities, was used, as that of Balaam had been, to point the sharpness of the rebuke, possibly with a special reference to the memorable scene when she, with unveiled face, and the brightness of her eyes heightened with the *kohl* of Eastern cosmetics, looked out of her palace window to try for the last time her powers of fascination, or, if those failed, of defiance, on the advancing conqueror and avenger (2 Kings ix. 30). It would hardly be at variance with what we know of the workings of the unrestrained orgiastic impulse at other times and in other countries (as, *e.g.*, in the Bacchanalia, of which Livy (xxxix 8-19) gives so

terrible a description) to assume that the words of verse 22 were literally true; and that here too the Agapæ, or love-feasts of the Christian Church, were stained, as the hints in 2 Peter ii. 13, 14, and Jude, verse 12, not obscurely intimate, with the perpetration of fathomless impurities in which this so-called prophetess was herself a sharer.

The words of threatening that follow on the statement of the guilt were not less distinctly personal in their character. As the incestuous adulterer at Corinth was delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Cor. v. 5); as those who polluted the supper of the Lord with riotous excess received not only the just reward, but the natural fruit of their sin, in sickness and in death (1 Cor. xi. 30), so it was here. The penal discipline of sickness was needed to wake up the self-blinded prophetess to perceive the real character of the evil into which she had plunged; and she was to be "cast into the bed" of pain and weariness; and those that were sharers in her guilt into "great tribulation," while "her children" were to be "slain with death." The received explanation of the last clause is that the "children" of the false prophetess were her followers and supporters; and for those who maintain the impersonal character of the woman Jezebel, as representing a wild heretical sect, such an interpretation is, of course, at once natural and inevitable. It is hard, however, to distinguish, on this hypothesis, between the "children" and "those that commit fornication with her," in their different degrees of complicity; and, on the whole, I see no reason for abandoning

the literal meaning even here. The writers of the New Testament recognized, as we have seen, in the events of life a Divine order, sometimes a Divine interposition; and as the death of the child of sin had been the appropriate penalty of David's great transgression (2 Sam. xii. 14), so it might be here. The loss of "the desire of her eyes," the death of the children who were the issue of her shameless life, was to be the sharpest pang in the penal discipline that was to come on her; and, stript and bare of all that once made the joy of life, weary and sick, without the smiles of children round her, the false prophetess was to await her end. So should all the Churches know that the Lord was "he which searcheth the hearts and reins," discerning all the baseness and impurity which were clothed with the high-sounding swelling words of knowledge, wisdom, freedom; that, though the long-suffering of God may in many cases reserve the execution of his sentence till the term of probation is over, there are yet others in which the sins of men bring on themselves a swift destruction, and that they which sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.

Another characteristic feature of the false teaching of these early Gnostics appears in the words that follow. They boasted that they alone had the courage and the power to know the "depths" of Satan. The peculiar addition, "as they say," indicates that the phrase was one in frequent use among them, and it throws light on the relation in which they stood to the great teachers of the Apostolic Church. Here, as in the matter of eating things sacrificed to idols, they were caricaturing and pervert-

ing the language of St. Paul. From him, after he had tracked the mysterious working of the Divine love in permitting evil for the sake of a greater good, had burst the rapturous cry, "Oh, the *depth* of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. xi. 33). He, in contemplating the glory which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, but which God had revealed by his Spirit, had spoken of that Spirit thus working in man as one that "searcheth all things, even the *deep* things of God" (1 Cor. ii. 10). It was, in the nature of things, probable that those who claimed a prophetic inspiration shewing itself in a higher form of knowledge than that which was given to others, should take up a phrase so congenial to their boastful claims, and talk much of their acquaintance with the "depths of God." If their boasts were limited to that knowledge, we must see in the startling phrase the "depths of Satan," the stern irony of condemnation. Their fancied knowledge of the mysteries of the Divine Nature, obtained by a deliberate transgression of every Divine commandment, did but bring them nearer to that Satanic nature, in which knowledge without holiness was seen in its highest power. As those who called themselves Jews were of the Synagogue of Satan, as those who boasted of their freedom were themselves the servants of corruption, so was it here. Every step they took that led them further into the depths of a mystic impurity did but identify them with that power of evil which Christ had come to conquer and destroy. It is possible, however, and the position of the words, "as they say," renders it even probable, that their dark imaginations

carried them even to the literal utterance of the words which are put, as it were, into their lips. We cannot conquer Satan, they may have said, so long as we are ignorant of any of his devices; we must enlarge the range of our experience till we have fathomed the depths of evil and emerged from them uninjured; we must shew that though the body may be a sharer in all that men count impure, it may yet leave the Spirit with a clear and unclouded vision of the things of God. That form of Antinomianism has too many parallels in the history of human error for us to think it incredible that it should have appeared in a soil so fruitful in all strange dreams of morbid fancy as that of the Asiatic Churches; and we need not wonder if a delusion to which the language, though not the life, even of a Luther at times drew perilously near, exercised its horrible fascination when it came from the lips of the false prophetess of Thyatira.

As the word "*depth*" gave us the key to the meaning of this part of the Message, so does the word "*burden*" to that of the part which follows: "*I will put upon you none other burden but that which ye have already; hold fast till I come.*" The Apostle hears from his Lord the echo of that decree to which he had once been a consenting party. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater *burden* than these necessary things" (Acts xv. 28). They might ask, as they heard this reproof of the freedom and the license which they claimed as boasting to be the true representatives of St. Paul's teaching, more Pauline than St. Paul himself, "Are we then to be brought

once again under the yoke of bondage? Is the Law, with all its restraints and prohibitions, to be once more the code of the Church of Christ?" To such questions the words which the Seer wrote supplied the answer: "No; that which you once welcomed as the great charter of your freedom has not been cancelled. You may have all the liberty which it permits. No other burden is to be imposed upon you—neither circumcision, nor that which circumcision implies. But that charter contained, in precise terms, the command to abstain from eating things sacrificed to idols, and from fornication; and these rules of life are still binding, as in accordance with the mind of Christ; the first as resting on the duty of witnessing for Christ, and the second as founded on the eternal law of purity. Keep that fast through all trials and temptations till I come, and then he that overcometh shall receive his due reward."

The nature of that reward in this instance is described in terms of singular grandeur: "I will give him authority [ἐξουσία, the might of right, not δύναμις, the right of might] over the Gentiles, and he shall guide them[1] [ποιμανεῖ, shall do a shepherd's work] with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken in pieces, even as I have received of my Father." The promise is nothing less than that the faithful victor shall be a sharer in the sovereignty of

[1] The use of the word in the LXX. Version of Psa. ii. seems, in the first instance, to have been merely a mistranslation resting on a false etymology of the words which in the Authorized Version is rendered "shalt break them." Here, however, and in Rev. xii. 5, as in so many other passages, the writer adopts the LXX. Version without any hesitation.

the Anointed King, as described in the great Messianic prophecy of Psa. ii. There is, we cannot but believe, the same special adaptation in this case, as in the others, of the promised reward to the peculiar circumstances of the conflict. That to which the Disciples were tempted was an undue compliance with the customs of the Heathen as such. Their fear of offending them, their reluctance to confess before them that they were worshippers of the Crucified, was bringing them into bondage. And therefore they were told that he who resisted that temptation should take his true position, as being over those Heathen; should, in the great manifestation of the kingdom, share in his Lord's rule of righteous, and therefore inflexible, severity; that then all the power and might of the Heathen that continued hostile to the Divine Kingdom should, like vessels of the potter not made to honour, be crushed to pieces. [1]

And, lastly, there was the yet more mysterious promise, "I will give unto him the morning star." As with the manna, and with the fruit of the tree of life, so also here, that which the Lord holds forth as the supreme and crowning blessing is the gift of Himself, the fruition of his glorious presence. That title of the "bright and morning star" is claimed by Him at the close of the Apocalypse as belonging to Himself as "the root and the offspring

[1] The argument used by Polycarp in dealing with the case already referred to presents a singular agreement with this passage: "Si quis non abstinuerit se ab avaritia (*i.e.*, πλεονεξία, in its secondary sense of impurity) ab idololatria coinquinabitur et tanquam inter gentes judicabitur. Quis autem ignoret judicium Domini? An nescimus quia sancti mundum judicabunt, sicut Paulus docet." ("Epist. ad Phil." c. xi.)

of David" (xxii. 16). And when He gives that star He gives Himself. Each symbol represents obviously a special aspect of that Divine presence. And the star had of old been the received emblem of sovereignty. Balaam had seen "a star coming out of Jacob, and a sceptre rising out of Judah" (Num. xxiv. 17); and the Magi of the East, seeing the star, set forth to worship Him who was born King of the Jews (Matt. ii. 2). It was the symbol of sovereignty on its brighter and benignant side, and was therefore the fitting and necessary complement of the dread attributes that had gone before. The King came not only to judge, and punish, and destroy, but also to illumine and to cheer. He was to be as the day-spring from on high, giving light to those that were in darkness and the shadow of death (Luke i. 78). All lower gifts of prophecy or knowledge were but as one of the lights of earth, as lamp, or torch, or candle, shining in a dark and squalid place where they did but make the darkness visible, but when the day star (φωσφόρος, Lucifer, the light-bringer) should arise in their hearts, men would rejoice in the fulness of its radiance. The gift of the morning star is therefore the gift of *that* attribute of sovereignty no less than of its judicial and penal majesty. The conqueror in the great strife should receive light in its fulness and transmit that light to others—and so should take his place among those that turn many to righteousness, and "shall shine as the stars" for ever (Dan. xii. 3).

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

HEAVEN.

GALATIANS ii. 20; ST. JOHN xiv. 2, 3; xvii. 24.

THE Christian teaching, that death means life, and more abundant life, sounds like a paradox. But, if it be a paradox, it is not peculiar to the Christian faith. Throughout the universe life is conditioned by death, and every advance in life implies and necessitates death. Nothing can live save as it extracts nourishment from air, or water, or earth, or from vegetable and animal tissues, by a process which involves the decomposition of that on which it feeds. A thousand good creatures of God die every year that I may live; and that I may grow, I myself am for ever dying in a thousand different forms. Processes of waste and reparation, of loss and gain, of destruction and reconstruction, are essential to all life, and to all advance in life. That which we commonly call "death" is but the last visible gradation of a series which no man can number; and as all previous deaths are conditions of life, so also, so pre-eminently, is the last. To die, to fling off "this muddy vesture of decay," is to enter into larger happier conditions, in which psychical processes and developments take the place of physical; in which we shall live after the spirit, not after the flesh: in which, that is, the highest kind of life we have attained here will move onward and upward toward its ultimate perfection.

We often mourn and complain,—when we have lost those whom we love, we often complain very bitterly, that "in vain our fancy strives to paint the moment after death;" that we know "so little," or

even that we know "nothing," of the state on which they have entered. We forget how much is involved in the mere affirmation that they have entered on a new and higher stage of life,—an affirmation which pervades the Christian Scriptures from end to end. And we fail to catch and brood over the many hints and intimations of the conditions of that life with which these Scriptures abound. Were we more meditative and more studious, were we even as earnestly bent on discovering what the life to be is like as we commonly assume that we are, we should soon learn so much of the blessed conditions of those who "die in the Lord," that death would be transfigured before our eyes; and, instead of mourning for the happy dead, we should rejoice over them with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is but a little while since I tried to shew[1] how much reason we have, in Holy Writ, for believing that the laws of continuity and development hold good, and work as wondrously, in the state after death as confessedly they do in the present stage of our existence; that there is no ground for assuming that death effects a sudden and monstrous change upon us, so that we are no longer the men we were or do not recognize either ourselves or those whom we once knew best: but that, on the contrary, there is much ground for believing that, with identity unchanged and unimpaired, we shall pass into a state in which we shall be surrounded by all happy and favourable conditions, both for shedding off whatever remains imperfect in us and for developing whatever is fair and noble and good. And in the

[1] See THE EXPOSITOR, vol i. pp. 267–279.

New Testament, besides the scriptures there cited, there are many passages which, while they abundantly confirm that view of the life to come, teem with hints and suggestions which add to and enlarge our conceptions of the heavenly life, if only we brood over them till they yield us their wealth of meaning.

In the present paper I propose to consider only two or three of these passages, in the hope that I may set my readers on considering for themselves the scores of similar passages, with the "letter" of which, at least, they are no doubt familiar.

1. I have already said that we often forget how much is involved in the word "*life;*" how much, therefore, is implied in the assurance that, when we die, we rise into a new and higher form of life. In the New Testament we are told, again and again, that they that have done good will enter into life, even as they that have done evil will enter into judgment. But until we reflect upon it, or till some side-light falls on it, we do not feel the force of this familiar promise. Such a side-light, such an aid to reflection, we may get from any scripture which describes that passage from death to life through which every believer in Christ enters into vital fellowship with Him. Let us take Galatians ii. 20.

When St. Paul wrote, "Nevertheless I live," he penned words which would form a noble epitaph for the tomb of any man who died in the Lord. But, when he penned those familiar words he was not writing an epitaph; he was rejoicing, not over his death *in* the flesh, but over his death *to* the flesh and sin. "I am crucified with Christ," he said; "*his*

death for sin carries with it *my* death to sin. But *though* dead, nay, *because* dead, I live; nay, more, Christ lives in me." What he meant by this apparent paradox, this life in death, we all know. A gracious change had passed upon him. A pure and noble development of his spiritual life had taken place. Once a sinner, he had found the Friend and Saviour of sinners. Once living to and for himself, he had learned to live for others by learning to live to Christ. Once seeking his own salvation by a strict and rigid adherence to the letter of the Law, he was now willing even to become accursed from Christ that his brethren might be saved. Charity had replaced Selfishness as the mainspring and motive of his life. This gracious change implied a death,—a death to selfishness, to sin, to law, and even to a selfish craving for his own salvation. And this death, in its turn, implied and was the essential condition of a new, larger, and more generous life. He could *only* live for others as he died to self. He could only live in the spirit as he died to the flesh. He could only live unto God as he died to the world.

Now this interior spiritual change is the highest we can know on this side the grave,—this passing through death into a higher type of life. And, therefore, it yields us our finest and truest illustration of the last change. When we are promised that the death of the body shall conduct us to an ampler and higher spiritual life, we may well believe that at least we shall pass through a change like that we experience at our conversion, like that which St. Paul experienced at his conversion.

Look at the man before and after, then. St. Paul, indeed, remained the very same man after he "saw the Lord," on his way to Damascus; and yet what a different man he became! how much more noble, spiritual, divine! His life was not broken in two, but transfigured. He did not lose his identity; even in the brief record we have of him we can trace the same personal traits, the same characteristic and distinguishing features after he became an Apostle as when he was a persecutor and blasphemer: but all these personal traits and characteristics are glorified by the change of motive and aim which had been wrought upon him by the grace of Christ.

On his conversion, moreover, St. Paul did not settle down into a mere tranquil enjoyment of happier spiritual conditions. On the contrary, he was "in labours more abundant" than before. With an inexhaustible and almost incredible energy he set himself to minister to the spiritual necessities of men,—not holding himself aloof from the vile and sinful as a being of a higher spiritual grade, but going among them as a brother and a friend, shewing them an ineffable tenderness, exhausting himself—"*wasting*" himself, as he puts it—in the endeavour to raise them to his own level. He felt that he had been called in order that he might call them; that he himself had been saved in order that he might at least "save some."

Does not even this poor and feeble description of the new access of life which attended his conversion suggest a very noble and attractive view of the Christian promise, that for us, too, death is

to be life, more life and fuller? If, when we die, we are to *live*, may we not take the greatest change from and through death to life of which we are conscious here as a figure of that last change? We surely may. And, therefore, we may well believe that, when we die, we shall remain the same men and women that we are now, and yet become very different men and women. *Our* life will not be broken in two, but transfigured. We shall not lose our identity; we shall still be ourselves; we shall know and be known: we shall preserve the traits of character which individualize us: but all these personal traits and characteristics will be suffused and glorified by an inward ennobling change of motive and aim. Charity will replace Selfishness. More completely than ever before we shall die to self that we may live for others, die in the flesh that we may live in the spirit, die to sin that we may live in holiness, die to imperfection that we may share the perfect life of God. It is no lazy and corrupting Paradise that lies before us, in which we shall loll on flowery meads, clothed in white raiment, with crowns on our heads and harps in our hands; but a spacious animated Heaven, in which God's love for the sinful and imperfect will beat in our breast and his labours for their salvation will engage our hands. Its white garments do but symbolize the unspotted holiness which will enable us, as it enabled Christ, to be the friends of sinners without being stained and defiled by their sins. Its crowns are but the symbols of a victory which will remain imperfect till all can share it with us. Its harps are the symbols, not of sweet self-

pleasing melodies with which we shall drown the cries of the lost, but of a noble music by which we shall seek to minister to minds diseased, and to bring a "pure concent" into hearts jangled and out of tune with the discords of selfishness and disobedience.

And if *this* be the meaning of "life," spiritual and eternal life, who will not, who ought not to desire it? What more noble end can any man set before himself than to become a partaker of the life which throbbed in the breast of St. Paul, nay, which beat, and still beats, in the very heart of Christ Himself? What room is there for the charge that, in seeking Heaven, we are aiming at a merely personal reward, and sinking into the selfishness from which it is the very office of Religion to deliver us, if *this* be the Heaven we seek,—a Heaven in which we are to have life, and to have it more abundantly, in which we are to develop our highest powers harmoniously, that we may more efficiently minister to the general welfare, that we may take part in the work of God and of Christ, and perchance even seek out and save that which is still lost? Till men can teach us a sublimer aim, and shew us a nobler Heaven, we must needs cling to this.

2. In St. John xiv. 2, 3, we read, "In my Father's house are many mansions: *if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Space would fail were I to attempt to bring out half the suggestions of this

familiar but noble passage. What most impresses me personally in it is the phrase, commonly overlooked,—"If it were not so, I would have told you." *That* would have been very hard work for Christ,—harder even, I think, than to die for our sins. Had He had to come and tell us that there was no home for us in Heaven, and no hope for us hereafter, surely his pitiful and compassionate heart would have broken under the strain. That He could so much as conceive Himself doing it is wonderful. Yet He assures us that He *would* have told us so if it had been true. And what a solemn impress of truth his assurance leaves on what He did tell us! viz., that in his Father's house are many mansions, and that He is even now occupied in preparing a suitable place for each one of us.

The figure which gave form to his thoughts was, doubtless, that of the Hebrew Temple, with its spacious courts and its innumerable chambers, in which a vast multitude found a home, and some task to do for God, and some worship in which they might take part,—in which porters and singers, beggars and children, found a home, as well as the rabbis and the priests. Viewed under this figure, Heaven is a mighty Temple, the abiding-place of the Almighty, in which He is worshipped day and night; and in this Temple are not only broad "courts" in which all may serve and praise Him, but many "mansions," each appropriately furnished, in which they may reside: and in these mansions a special "place" for each one of them which Christ is preparing for their reception,—exquisitely adapting it, that is, to their special tastes and needs, to the

task they will have to do, and to the happy and harmonious development of their individual character and bent.

When we are told, in general terms that, after death, we shall possess *life* for evermore, the mere promise of life is full of happy suggestions for us, so soon as we reflect on what an access of spiritual life involves. But "life" is a large word, and we crave something more special and definite. Here it is, then, in this gracious assurance that there are many mansions in our Father's house, each adapted to the wants of this class or that (or why are there "many" of them ?), yet all under one roof; and that, in some one of these mansions, a special and suitable "place" is being prepared for each of us. Not only, therefore, shall we preserve our identity in the world beyond the grave, but that identity will be respected and provided for. All that is most characteristic in us will have its due training and environment. He who knows us best, He who knows us altogether, is even now taking thought for us, considering what conditions we need, what tasks, what discipline, what companions, what joys, and getting them all ready for us against we come. The whole large world of Heaven is ordered by his infinite wisdom and love; its whole society is organized by Him, and so organized that we shall each find in it the very place we are fitted to fill, the very work we are able to do, the very training and auspicious conditions that we severally require.

Is not this, too, a happy and attractive conception of Heaven? Is there anything base or selfish in craving such a Heaven as this? If we heartily

believed in it, should we lament that even our dearest friend was called to enter it?

3. In St. John xvii. 24, we read that, as He prayed, our Lord said: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, *that they may behold my glory!*" If we linger on that last phrase till we feel what is meant and involved in beholding the glory of Christ, we get a new conception of the heavenly blessedness. We behold Him manifesting forth his glory as we read the Gospels. What would we give, what would we *not* give, for another Gospel, with new stories of his wondrous life from day to day, with new parables as tender and charming as that of the Good Shepherd, or the Good Samaritan, or the Prodigal Son, and new discourses as calm and simple and profound as the Sermon on the Mount! God could give us such another Gospel; for if all the things which Jesus did and said should be written every one, we should have a new and larger Bible; and doubtless He *would* give us a new Gospel, or even a new Bible, if it would be good for us to have it.

How often, too, do we wish that we could have seen but a part of the Gospel story *enacted*, that we could have walked with Christ, if only for a single day, and have seen the mighty works He did and heard the gracious words that fell from his lips!

But what, after all, would new records of his earthly life be, or what even that we should have seen his face and listened to his words as He walked among men, compared with that which lies before us? The Past holds much which we shall never willingly let die; but it is in the Future that our

true home lies and our true blessedness. We, who would give much to read a new Gospel, much also could we have witnessed one of Christ's works or have listened to but one of his discourses, are to see a whole new Gospel enacted before our eyes, and *that* as much more glorious than the Gospels written by the Evangelists as Heaven is higher than the earth! We are to behold Christ in his glory. And it will not be a dumb Christ on whom we shall look, or an inert inactive Christ, but a living, transfigured, glorified Christ, whose words will still give life and whose acts will still be acts of mercy and love. We shall see Him as the favoured Three saw Him on the Mount, but in a light even brighter than that of the sun. We shall see him as St. Paul and St. John saw Him in vision, when they were caught up into Paradise, and beheld wonders and listened to words which could not be uttered in the tongues of our imperfection; but we shall see Him more clearly than they who had but eyes of flesh, and more continuously, for we shall go out of his Presence no more for ever. And, best of all, as we behold Him in his glory, we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, until we are *satisfied* with his likeness.

As we meditate on these and kindred hints of the glory that awaits us, our hearts are filled with an unconquerable hope, an unutterable thankfulness; the sting is taken from death, the victory from the grave. If only we could heartily, and at all times, believe in this high teaching, we could neither fear death for ourselves, nor mourn when those who are dear to us as our own soul are called to pass through

that dark Portal which, though it rear itself so frowningly before our eyes, glows with the light of life on the *inward* side. If only we heartily believed that those whom we have lost are with Christ, the same as we knew them, with all their familiar traits and affections, but yet transfigured by a great ennobling change of motive and aim; if we believed that, when they died, Christ came to receive them to Himself and to instal them in that mansion, that place, which He had made ready for them, and in which they now find tasks, services, training, joys exactly and exquisitely adapted to unfold all that is best and highest in them: if we believed that they now behold his glory, that they see Him enacting a new and greater Gospel than that of his earthly life, —how could we dare to mourn for them? how should we not, rather, rejoice that they had been delivered out of the pains and imperfections of this present world into such joy and felicity as *that?* Nor could death have any terror for *us* if only we were heartily assured that, when we die, we too shall live unto God; that He will receive us into his house, into his family, where, surrounded by all blessed and auspicious conditions, we shall move onward and upward, from court to court of the Heavenly Temple, until we stand in the very presence-chamber of the Lord Almighty and All-gracious.

We believe in God, and in Christ; let us also believe in his revelation of the life to come.

CARPUS.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER III. VERSES 15 AND 16.

MANY Commentators have placed a full stop before the last clause of verse 15, and have supposed that in this clause St. Paul characterized the "mystery of godliness," not "the Church of the living God." Chrysostom inclined to this view; and Irenæus twice over speaks of the *Gospel* as "the pillar and ground of the truth." Mosheim, Bengel, Rosenmüller, Lange, and others have maintained that we should read thus: "A pillar and foundation of the truth, and confessedly great, is the mystery of godliness." This arrangement is, according to De Wette and Ellicott, "hopelessly artificial, abrupt, and illogical." If this can be established, let the punctuation be relinquished; but it is unnecessary to condemn the motives of Protestant exegetes who, by adopting it, have avoided the inference that has been unwarrantably drawn from the received punctuation, to the effect that the Church, as a specific organization, is the fontal source, infallible organ, and sole depository of the truth. It is certainly not contrary to the apostolic style in this very Epistle to accumulate predicates of high significance before some great assertion. *E.g.*, chap. i. 15 would provide a very similar collocation of words.

Others—Gregory of Nyssa, Erasmus, Chillingworth—have supposed that *Timothy* was addressed as a "pillar and ground of the truth." This would be "artificial" indeed; and pillars and foundations do not "know" and cannot "conduct themselves in the house" of which they form a part.

Doubtless the reference to the Church of the living God is the most simple and direct construction. But in what sense? Suicer[1] has given a very exhaustive treatment of the words, quoting abundantly from Dic Halicarnassus, Plautus, Varro, and many others in proof of the use to which "pillars" were put, shewing how the laws were engraven or suspended on them, for warning, menace, or instruction. Temples, as we know, were richly adorned with pillars. The famous Temple of Artemis was enriched with costly monoliths, the gifts of kings; and the Temple of Jerusalem with the columns of Jachin and Boaz, at the spot where the kings were customarily proclaimed. Moreover, to these columns were sometimes due the stability as well as the beauty of the fabric. If this were in the writer's mind, the image here used represents the Church to be the stability and beauty of the truth, not the truth to be the stability and beauty of the Church. The assertion amounts to this,—that the Church is the "resting-place" and the "support" of the truth, that it provides the noblest means of exhibiting the truth to the world. Now, in the previous verse, the Church of God has been described as a dwelling-place of the living God; and, according to the construction of the old temples, there was a house within a house. Just as the *ναὸς*, or shrine, gave all its meaning and sanctity to the larger enclosure called the *ἱερὸν*, so the Apostle treats "the truth" as a beautiful fabric, a vast temple, which is strengthened and supported and adorned by "a pillar and foundation," which is in itself a "house of God."

[1] "Thesaurus," art. *στύλος*, vol. ii.

The illustration not only gives a lofty function to the Church, but supplies a test for its every claim. Truth is not the objective fact itself, but the experience and expression by true men of such facts. Truth cannot ultimately reside in the form of texts or creeds, in dead languages, symbols, or formulæ; it must enter into human consciousness, be a living experience, find expression in character and action, and reveal itself in worship, love, and obedience. If scientific truth, as the sum total of what is known of Nature, were looked at as a great temple of beautiful and complicated form, the entire congregation of scientific men would be the pillar and ground of such a temple. If science were buried in formulæ, and did not live in active thoughtful men, it would soon become utterly corrupt and valueless. If those who professed to embody it and develop it became unfaithful to the truth, were actuated by false motives and selfish ends, or party-spirit; if some close corporation of *savans* should profess to monopolize all truth, and repudiate every method of reaching it except that which has received their own imprimatur; then those who are more faithful to it than they would become in their turn "the pillar and ground of such truth."

We have the means of knowing what the truth of God is independently of the decisions or developments of any particular society. Should any community defile, overlay, undermine, emasculate "the truth," then such a community is not the Church of the living God. The Church of God as a distinct organization was, alas! unfaithful to God's truth in the days of the Apostles, and such unfaithfulness to her high function has not been confined to the apostolic age.

Verse 16.—AND: the καὶ brings forward the climacteric expression, by which a full reason is offered for Timothy's faithfulness. The truth to which the Church is the witness is nothing less than the sublime Fact and Person, in whom all things consist, who is *the Truth and the Life* of all things.

And confessedly great is the mystery of godliness. The word ὁμολογουμένως[1] is positive in its meaning, and neither suggests nor repudiates "controversy." High above the strife of parties and the jangling and follies of false teachers, "confessedly great," admitted by all alike to be of prime importance, is this "opened secret of the Divine life," this mystery of godliness.

The next word in the Greek text has occasioned much discussion. The theological heat with which this purely palæographical question was discussed has passed away, and we are learning to deal more patiently and scientifically with the elements of textual criticism. It would far exceed my present purpose or limits to discuss the history or process of the famous controversy, as between *OC* and *ΘEOC* in the uncial manuscripts.

The care with which the manuscripts have been examined, to determine the actual reading, amounts, in some instances, to a romance. There can be no doubt now, after the researches of Griesbach, Tischendorf, Alford, Tregelles, Ellicott, and Birch, that *OC* is the original reading of the Alexandrian Manuscript. This is affirmed by the majority of the uncial manuscripts, including the Sinaitic.

The reading *ΘEOC* is found in I and K, and in

[1] Suicer, "Thesaurus," *sub voce*, shews, by great accumulation of evidence, this usage in the later Greek writers.

the majority of cursive manuscripts, and seems to have been the text read by Hippolytus, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Damascenus, and other Greek Fathers; but supposing it had been in the original text, it is remarkable that it was not advanced in the Arian and Nestorian controversy, in proof of the Divinity of our Lord. Wettstein, in his elaborate treatment of the text, leans to the reading ὅ, which is found in D', and he justifies it with great acuteness and learning from the use made of it in Latin versions and Latin Fathers. Alford and Ellicott urge that this reading is a correction from ὅς, to make it agree with μυστήριον. However, it was not "the mystery" which was manifested and received up into glory: and if ὅ be the true reading, the Apostle says, "that that which was manifested in the flesh was seen by angels," &c. (*Cf.* 1 John i. 4; John i. 4, 46; iii. 26, 34.)

If we are to be governed by internal considerations, ὅ seems to throw the greatest light on the passage; but it cannot stand before the evidence in favour of ὅς, which may be considered as finally determined. Dr. Davidson has recently translated it—"in him who was manifested in the flesh." We prefer a certain abruptness, and would render it thus: "*He who was manifested in the flesh.*" Ellicott objects to giving this force to a relative pronoun, which is not emphatic, and regards it as a relative to an omitted antecedent, such as CHRIST, or, SON OF GOD. The whole verse is thought by Heydenreich and Mack to be a portion of a rhythmical or responsive hymn, akin to that which we find in Ephes. v. 14. This might account for the difficulty of the construction; as the fragment quoted would be gram-

matically ruled by its original reference, and would be left unaltered. This hypothesis furnishes us with another pregnant hint of the truths and mutually accredited ideas and sentiments which appear continually to be underlying, and therefore preceding, the composition of the earliest fragments of the New Testament.

These words, or words like them, may already have been sung in the churches and homes of the Christians in Ephesus and Rome.

A few words only of detailed exposition. If Christ was "*manifested* in the flesh," those who said or sang of this manifestation must have believed in his pre-existent glory. The "flesh" sometimes means (1) the human body (1 Cor. xv. 50; Rom. ii. 28); sometimes (2) "the body" as distinct from the "spirit" (Luke xxiv. 49); often, however, (3) as "the body, soul, and spirit," the whole of humanity, without insisting on the contrariety between the Divine and human (Matt. xxiv. 22; Luke iii. 6; John i. 14; xvii. 2). It has another and frequent usage for (4) humanity without God (John iii. 6; Rom. vii. 5, 18, 25); but here it is obviously used in the third of these meanings. As the Logos became flesh, or "humanity," so He who was from the beginning was manifested in the flesh, and, concealed by the veil of his humanity, was *justified as such in the Spirit.* The Spirit was given to men to open their eyes to the meaning of this manifestation. He was declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit, by or from his resurrection. The eye of the flesh saw Him to be wounded, bruised, and reckoned among trans-

gressors. The Spirit convinced the world that "he was wounded for our transgressions," and that its greatest sin was the rejection of his claims. *He appeared to angels.* The words are confirmed by the analogous assertion that, "unto principalities and powers in heavenly places was made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." He who was thus vindicated to angels and to men *was preached among the nations.* The grand peculiarity of the Royalty of Christ is that his claims have been admitted by opposing and divergent nationalities and various types of civilization. The empire of Buddhism is vast; but it is among peoples that have had much in common. Christianity from the first gained its victories over Barbarian and Athenian, over the Roman, the Jew, the African, and the Oriental. He was *believed on in the world, and received up into glory.* There is a sublime contrast drawn here between the "world" and "glory." Though He is hidden in God, though He is seated on the right-hand of the Majesty on high, the world has yet come to believe in this supersensuous and supernatural fact. There is a clear reference here to the historic ascension of Jesus.[1] The session in heaven was the close of his manifestation in the flesh and the beginning of his glorious reign over the world of men. All these terms are prophetic, and a higher fulfilment of them all is awaiting the Church. But we have enough in the history of the risen Christ to help us to blend our notes of praise with the triumphant song of the early Church.

H. R. REYNOLDS.

[1] *Cf.* ἀνελήμφθη with Mark xvi. 19; Acts i. 2; Luke xxiv. 51.

THE EXPOSITOR.

THE PARABLE OF THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

ST. MATTHEW XX. 1–16.

THE parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard is peculiar to St. Matthew, and is placed by him in a context which is evidently in direct relation to it. A rich young "ruler" (*i.e.*, as we may suppose, like Jairus, the ruler or director of a synagogue), seizing the spirit of Jewish legalism, and thinking that from the new Rabbi he should obtain some new formula with which he was hitherto unacquainted, came to Jesus, and asked Him eagerly "what he should do to inherit eternal life." He was told in reply that if he would be perfect—if he would come up to the highest standard—he must distribute all his wealth among the poor and cast in his lot unreservedly with the band of wandering Galilean peasants and fishermen whom he saw before him. For some reason, which we must not stay now to inquire into, our Lord put before this young man a lofty and severe ideal of duty, to which, for the present at least, he was not equal. Whether at any future time he accepted the terms that were offered him does not appear; but, at any rate, he could not make up

his mind to them at once, and he went away disappointed and crestfallen.

After his departure the conversation turned upon the hindrance that riches oppose to any true discipleship of Christ. And Peter, contrasting, not without some self-satisfaction, the sacrifices that he and his fellow-disciples had made with the unwillingness to part with his wealth displayed by the young ruler, asked what reward he and they were to have. The answer to such a question must evidently cut both ways. On the one hand it must assert the truth that any seeming loss which the disciple undergoes is not really such, but rather a gain. God does not require of his servants any surrender which will not be amply, and far more than amply, made up to them. And, on the other hand, the ambition and self-assertion of Peter must needs receive correction. The first of these two objects is met in the last verses of Matt. xix., and the second in the parable which forms the opening section of Matt. xx. The one is linked on to the other by means of the clause of reservation added to the promise of reward. The reward indeed shall be in highly augmented ratio. It shall be nothing less than the gift of eternal life. But, "many who are last shall be first, and the first last."

The eye naturally passes from these words to those which conclude the parable that follows, Matt. xx. 16. Here they are almost exactly repeated, and with a less qualified exactness than would appear from our Authorized Version. In this there is an addition that must in all probability be set aside as not part of the original Gospel. The clause, "Many are called, but

few chosen," though undoubtedly genuine in the second place where it occurs, Matt. xxii. 14, is wanting in the two oldest MSS., the Vatican and Sinaitic, with two other important uncials,[1] and also in the two Egyptian versions, a group which is shewn by accumulated evidence to represent the best type of text. The corrupt addition, like so many more, seems to have been early made and soon to have spread, especially over the Syrian and Latin Churches. It is important that this excrescence should be cleared away, as some Commentators have been perplexed,[2] and others (*e.g.*, notably Stier) have been entirely misled by it in their interpretation of the parable. The genuine text ends with the words, "So the last shall be first and the first last." In these we are to look for the summing up, or moral, of the parable, which we shall come to consider in due course.

There are three points in the parable that it may be well for us to take separately: (1) The hiring of the labourers, (2) the times of the hiring, (3) the payment which they receive.

[1] Z, the Dublin Palimpsest, which contains only 290 verses of the First Gospel, but is of the highest value, indeed second only to ℵ and B, for any passage on which its testimony is extant; and L, the Codex Regius, at Paris, which marks a transition text, sometimes siding with the oldest authorities and sometimes heading the array of later witnesses. The clause was bracketed by Tregelles (before the discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus), and is omitted by Tischendorf (8th edition, not 7th), Westcott and Hort, and McClellan.

[2] Archbishop Trench among the number: "There is more difficulty in the closing words, 'For many be called, but few chosen.' They are not hard in themselves, but only in the position which they occupy," &c.—"Notes on the Parables," p. 189. This was written before quite so much attention had been paid to text criticism as it has received since, otherwise the difficulty would have found an easy solution.

(1) *The Hiring.* The late Dean Alford begins his comment upon the parable by laying down as its *punctum saliens* that "the kingdom of God is of grace, not of debt." I do not wish to imply that this is not true; but, strange to say, the very opposite might almost be deduced from it. If we take the first set of labourers only, their relations throughout are strictly those of debt. They are hired for certain work, at a certain price. They are to do a day's work at the ordinary rate of a denarius — which, without very much straining, we may paraphrase, with Mr. McClellan, as a "shilling." They go into the vineyard; they fulfil their part of the contract; they earn the promised wages, and they receive them. It is a plain commercial transaction, in which both parties duly perform their share.

It may seem to be somewhat otherwise with the labourers who are sent into the vineyard last. They also receive a shilling, though they have worked but a single hour. We can well understand that this would seem to them to be due to the bounty of their employer. They would hardly expect to receive as much. And yet when we look back at the terms of the contract, here, too, the same element of justice appears. "Whatsoever is right (δίκαιον) I will give you;" "Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." The second of these clauses, indeed, like the latter part of verse 16, seems to be not strictly genuine.[1] It is wanting not only in the group of MSS. mentioned already, but also in the Old Latin translation.

[1] The best critical editors are agreed in its excision. Mr. McClellan, again, appears on the side to which he is, in some important instances, opposed.

It is a later Alexandrine and Syrian reading, which thence passed into the current Constantinopolitan text. The sense, however, is the same. There can be little doubt that the condition, "whatever is right I will give you," which is expressly stated at the hiring of the second party of labourers, is to be extended to those who were sent into the vineyard later. They, too, were to receive what was *just*. Their pay is a μισθός,—wages for work done.

Some of the Commentators on the Protestant side have tried hard to evade this conclusion. Starting from the Reformation doctrine of Justification by Faith only, and seeming to see a contradiction of this in an exegesis which would represent the gift of God as in any way earned by the works of man, they have sought to explain away the nature of the gift and to restrict it to merely temporal goods. They have made it out to be the "houses, and brethren, and children, and lands" of Chap. xix. 29, but not the "everlasting life" that is coupled with these earthly possessions. It is sufficiently clear, however, that no such limitation is really possible. The eventide is the Parousia—the second coming of the Son of Man, when all who have served Him will be summoned into his presence, to receive according to that they have done.

Our language is apt to fall into metaphors taken from this very act, the payment of wages. Necessarily and naturally. It is the language of Scripture: "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then shall he reward every man according to his works;" "God shall render to every man according to his deeds;" "Every man

shall receive his own reward according to his labour;" "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;" "The Father, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work;" "I will give unto every one of you according to his works;" "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man as his work shall be."[1]

We can afford to let these passages have their full weight all the more as we are less inclined to give a one-sided prominence to the opposite doctrine. For an opposite (or, shall we say rather, complementary?) doctrine there is, which is equally true: "By grace ye are saved;" "We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;" "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."[2]

Both sets of passages are equally explicit. On the one hand the future reward is represented as determined by what a man does to deserve it. On the other hand it is represented, not as owed or earned, but as given out of the manifold mercy and bounty of God, through the reconciliation wrought by his Son.

[1] Matt. xvi. 27; Rom. ii. 6; 1 Cor. iii. 8; 2 Cor. v. 10; 1 Pet. i. 17; Rev. ii. 23; xxii. 12.

[2] Ephes. ii. 5; Rom. iii. 24; iv. 4, 16.

These two different points of view seem to be naturally reached according as we follow different lines of thought. If we contemplate immediately and in itself the relation of the work done to the reward received, at once it is seen to be out of all proportion. There is no merit in anything we can do to account for the bountifulness of the promises that God has vouchsafed to us. There is a taint, if not actually on, yet very near to, the best we do. That the stumbling, heartless, inconstant service of earth should meet with such an infinitely glorious return can only be of grace—a free gift, not bought, but bestowed. Yet, on the other hand, if we ask upon whom is that gift to be bestowed? for whom is this grace to be exercised? in what comparative proportions shall it be exercised? then we inevitably fall back upon the question what the man is in himself. If man is a free agent at all (and that he is so is the first postulate of all morals and religion), then it follows that his place must ultimately be determined by the way in which he has used his power of willing.

The contradiction, indeed (so far as there is one), runs through from the very beginning. Man is a creature of circumstances: yet he is free. He is bidden to work in God's vineyard: yet at best his labour will be unprofitable. He will be judged according to his works: and yet by grace he is saved. It is not that works have a merit, directly and immediately, in themselves. But works are the test of what a man *is*—they are the test, the outward visible sign of faith itself. And by what he is he will be classed at the day of judgment.

But if a man were judged simply by what he is—if a severe balance were struck between his good and his evil deeds—no reward would be possible to him at all. That he should receive a reward—and such a reward as he will receive—is an act of grace. Relatively to his fellow-men, to that division and classification on which any system of judgment must be based, salvation is of works. Absolutely, and in regard to the relation between the soul and its God, salvation is of grace.

Perhaps this comes out somewhat more clearly in another parable, which may be used to illustrate this of the Labourers in the Vineyard,—the parable of the Talents. There one servant receives five talents, and by putting them out to trade he gains five talents more. Another, who receives two talents, gains two. But how is the reward proportioned to the merit? Is it at all on the same scale? The contrary is brought out expressly and vividly. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Or, as it appears in a still more precise and definite form in the Third Gospel, he who has gained the ten pounds is made to have rule over ten *cities*, he who has gained five pounds over five. That which is measured on the one hand in terms of retail trade, is measured on the other in terms of regal authority and power. "Not as the offence," nor yet as the service, "so is the free gift."

> "God doth not need
> Either man's work, or his own gifts."

And the limit of man's power to work for Him is not the limit of his grace.

(2) *The Times of Hiring.* The question is frequently raised as to the presence of secondary meanings or applications in Scripture. No doubt they exist, and, in our Lord's words especially, to a very large extent indeed. But the account of them seems to be, not so much that the sacred writer or speaker has in his mind, at one and the same time, two or more different sets of events, but that he penetrates to the single law which binds those events together. The laws of the Divine action are uniform. They are made so in order that we may have the power of forecasting their operation and of acting upon them. God deals upon the same principles with individuals separately and with nations and bodies of men collectively. Hence it is not strange if the parables, which express such deep spiritual truths, should be found to have applications on many sides. There is hardly an end to the possible applications of them.

Thus we are not really compelled to choose, as some Commentators have felt bound to do, between different ways of applying the parable before us. A true interpretation will embrace them all. The master of the vineyard is represented as going out in the early morning, *i.e.*, soon after sunrise, when work began, or, according to our modern reckoning, approximately, at six o'clock, at nine, at noon, at three, and at five. And on each occasion he sends labourers into his vineyard, at the later hours not without reproach to them for standing idle so long.

Those called early, say some, were the Jews; those called later are the Gentiles. Origen maintained that the different hours were rather epochs in

the history of the world, such as the Flood, the Call of Abraham, the Mission of Moses. Bengel would make them periods in the ministry of our Lord Himself, from the first calling of the Apostles to the Ascension and Day of Pentecost; Meyer, periods in the whole Messianic dispensation, from the coming of the Messiah to the Parousia. Others, with Chrysostom and Jerome, say that they refer to periods in the lifetime of individuals. The labourers who are hired in the early morning are those who, "like Samuel, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist, can say with the Psalmist, 'Thou art my God, even from my mother's womb.'" To go into the vineyard at the third hour is to enter the service of God in youth. Noon represents manhood; the ninth hour declining years; the eleventh, old age, when some have even yet heard and obeyed the heavenly call.

There is no need to pick and choose. The summons of God is made at sundry times and in divers manners, both to nations, to bodies of men, and to individuals. The same rule holds good for one as for the other. It is this rule that our Lord expresses in so lively a manner in the parable, not any of the particular cases that come under it. It may be applied to them, but they do not exhaust it. It has been, is being, and will be, fulfilled. It belongs equally to past, present, and future.

(3) *The Payment of the Labourers.* In these ways, then, the parable is instructive. They do not, however, touch its main point. That is reserved for the end. And here the more serious difficulties of the parable begin.

The labourers are called in to receive their day's

wage; and all of them alike, both those who had worked the whole twelve hours and those who had worked only one, receive the sum stipulated for with the first body—the denarius, or shilling. The order, too, in which they are paid is an inverted one. The late comers are called up first, and so on backwards.

Now thus much is clear. The evening, when work ceases and the paying-time comes, is the Great Audit. The master of the house is He in whose name that Audit is to be held, and the ἐπίτροπος, or steward, is Christ. We reject as erroneous all interpretations which explain the payment in any other way. It is the gift of eternal life.

There are, however, some points that this parable leaves open. It is not intended to convey any decision as to the relation between the hour of death and the hour of judgment. Both are represented as taking place at the same time, or as immediately following each other. The labourers leave the vineyard, and they are at once summoned into the counting-house to receive their due. The interval, such as we believe there will be, is foreshortened. The parable is silent as to specific information on this head.

Neither is any inference to be drawn from the equality of the sum paid. All the labourers receive the shilling; but it does not therefore follow that future rewards will be equal. The direct contrary is stated in other parables. The servant who trades with the money his lord committed to him and makes ten pounds becomes governor over ten cities: he who has been less successful, but yet successful, has rule over five. The Twelve Apostles are to "sit

on thrones." There are "least and greatest" in the kingdom of heaven, Many are called, but few are raised to any elect or special dignity. These are direct statements made with reference to the particular point of the ranks or gradations in the Messianic kingdom. But here, in the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, there is a different purpose. It deals indeed with the question of rank and gradation, but only in a relative sense, as between different individuals or bodies of men. For the purposes of the parable it comes to the same thing, whether equal labour (or what seems to be equal labour) receives reward upon a graduated scale, or seemingly different amounts of labour are paid on the same scale. The point of the parable does not turn upon this. "Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive."

The real question and the real difficulty lies in the comparative treatment of the different parties of labourers—in the fact that the first are made last and the last first. It is round this sentence that the whole parable hinges. It is not to be denied that there is a difficulty, which cannot be explained as merely accidental. It is part of the intention of the parable, and is just what makes it so instructive.

When it comes to be the turn of the first set of labourers to be paid, they too receive the shilling for which they had bargained. At this they grumble and complain, and they make bold to remonstrate with the master of the house. "These last have spent [or "made," literally, but idiomatically, as our own workmen sometimes say] but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day." The reply that

they receive is quiet and courteous, but absolutely decisive and uncompromising: "Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a shilling? Take up thine own, and go thy way. It is my pleasure to give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I please with mine own? Or is thine eye evil because I am good? Art thou envious because I am liberal?" There can be no rejoinder to this. The grounds alleged are beyond dispute: first, the bargain—a shilling they were to receive and a shilling they got; and, secondly, the will and pleasure of the master of the house; his money was his own, and if he chose to give to one and not to another, his right none could question.

We, too, must needs acquiesce in this reasoning. And yet is there not a faintly-heard murmur in our own consciences? Have we not at heart a lurking sympathy with the disappointed workmen? If such a case were to happen in real life, if any one of us were to treat his workmen in this way, we should indeed admit, as we needs must, the justice of the reply; and yet there would be an undertone of remonstrance and doubt as to whether, after all, the men who met with such rigorous measure had not some right on their side, and did not do well to be aggrieved. What shall we say to this? It is not wrong to ask such questions. It is best not to blink difficulties, because by turning back upon and seeking to penetrate deeper into them, we often reach a truer meaning.

Is not this an instance of that wonderful phenomenon which we may, perhaps, venture to call the

irony of Jesus? This is not the only time or occasion that He, the Holy One, spoke in a way that may seem for the moment to a superficial eye to contradict the tenor of his own mission. He disclaimed for Himself the title of "Good." He likened the Christian elsewhere to a fraudulent steward. He drew one of his parables from an unjust and selfish judge, who is wearied, by sheer persistence on the part of the petitioner, into granting what his own sense of right is insufficient to move him to grant; another from the conduct of a man who will do to save himself annoyance more than ever he will do for the sake of friendship. A criticism, shallow with all its ability and learning, has stumbled at these sayings and cast a doubt upon their genuineness.[1] But which of the disciples possessed that finely-tempered and gracious audacity which could invent them? It is not the sinner who speaks, but the deep and thrilling humanity of Him who was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

In the answer of the master of the house something is spoken and something is withheld. The reply is adapted to the nature of the remonstrance. If that had been made in a different manner and spirit we may believe that perhaps less reserve and more confidence would have been shewn. As it is, the answer that is given is absolutely valid and true. It is one side of the truth, and the side that will always be turned against murmurers. It reminds us of the words of St. Paul: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed

[1] *Cf.* Keim, "Geschichte Jesu von Nazara," 1. p. 74, n. 2.

say to him that formed it, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?"[1] A view of destiny stern and severe, but true, though clearly not an exhaustive account either of Divine Justice or Divine Mercy. So here in the parable we have to do only with the apparent aspect of things. The time at which the labourers had been at work is disregarded in the wages which they receive. But time is, as all experience shews, a very imperfect test of the value of labour.[2] It is only said that the later-called labourers worked for a shorter time, not that their work was essentially of less value than that of those who were called first. The reverse of this is implied: "Whatsoever is right, I will give you." The promise is put upon the ground of justice. It was really, we may be sure, justice, and not partial or capricious generosity, that regulated the reward. This is the unwavering language of Scripture: God will "render to every man according to his deeds; . . . unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, . . . indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for *there is no respect of persons with God.*[3]

[1] Romans ix. 20, 21.

[2] "Finis parabolæ est mercedem vitæ æternæ non tempori quo quis laboravit, sed labori et operi quod fecit respondere."—Maldonatus, quoted by Trench. Dr. Trench criticises this view unfavourably, and no doubt it is mistaken in assigning as the main object of the parable what is really, as it were, only a kind of hidden background to it.

[3] Romans ii. 6, 8–11.

Apply the parable, in each of its different senses, and all becomes clear. The Jew was first called. God had made with him a solemn covenant. His were "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." His were "the fathers of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." There was a time when all the rest of the world was standing idle in the market-place, when it could be said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth."[1] And yet the Gentile kingdoms, even those who were last admitted, would not therefore be at a disadvantage if they were faithful to their calling. Even then the first might be last and the last first.

Or, still more strikingly, within the circle of the Apostles: Peter himself, it was true, had been among the first to receive the summons, and yet he was outdone by one who spoke of himself as "born out of due time, the least of the apostles, and not meet to be called an apostle," who had not only stood idle, but had actually persecuted the Church of God. This relation between St. Peter and St. Paul may be said to be prophetically anticipated in the parable. In it a warning was conveyed to the elder Apostle that, though he had left all to follow Christ, still no primacy was assured to him; and he was at the same time admonished not to look forward in that spirit of jealousy and self-assertion (in his case, perhaps, thoughtless rather than deliberate) which prompted his question, "What shall we have therefore?"

This is the main purport of the parable. In calling attention to the fact that the mention of the time

[1] Amos iii. 2.

at which the labourers had been at work tells us nothing as to the nature and value (*i.e.*, relative or comparative value) of that work, it is not intended that this is more than an incidental feature. We insist upon it only because it is here that the difficulty of the parable and the explanation of the difficulty seem to lie. The judgments of God are not arbitrary, though they might seem so, if looked at through the glasses of human jealousy and ignorance. The first may be last and the last first, and yet justice, infinite and perfect justice, governs the Divine awards. Those who make so bold as to murmur at the lot apportioned to them will be answered as they deserve. The severer side of God's Providence will be turned upon them. They will have the mysteries of Omnipotence unfolded to them rather than the mysteries of Grace. In a truly humble, and gentle, and reverent mind such questions will never arise at all.

And yet, on the other hand, we must not take too exaggerated a view of the character of those who found themselves so unexpectedly levelled and degraded. They, too, receive each the wages that were agreed upon. We must take our stand upon this, and not suffer ourselves to be led away by any comments that, through a narrow conception both of human nature and Divine grace, construe the rebuke into a sentence of complete and final reprobation. All that is meant is the often-taught lesson, that those who are greatest in their own estimation and in that of the world shall be least in the kingdom of heaven. A place in that kingdom, though a much humbler one than they supposed, will not be denied them.

The class of minds indicated in the parable is very similar to that which is exemplified by the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son. There, again, it is a mistake to suppose that, though offending on that one point, the murmurer is unreservedly and utterly condemned. We might almost go so far as to say that in neither case is the murmuring quite of the essence of the parable. The state of things that gives rise to the murmur is the real point. The murmur itself is accessory rather than principal. It serves to "justify the ways of God to men," by introducing a proposition that helps to explain them. At the same time, incidentally, it throws in a touch of true psychology. It is not intended that at the Last Day there will be even the possibility of querulous appeal. But there are some minds the unspoken thought of which would be such an appeal. There are querulous and thankless spirits who do indeed that which is required of them, but in a cheerless, unimpassioned, dull, precise, and mechanical way. Like most formalists they have a good opinion of themselves and of their own place in the sight of God. They are apt to count up their good deeds: "We have borne the burden and heat of the day;" "Lo, these many years have I served thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." Their religion does not begin in self-abasement. They have never known that peculiarly crushed and helpless feeling that is implied in the word "contrition." They have something of the Pharisaic leaven about them, though they are not quite Pharisees. They are hard and unsympathetic in their judgments, and though they

confess in words their own unworthiness, still at heart they barely escape congratulating themselves that they are not as other men.

Still there is a truth in their plea. They *have* borne the burden and heat. They *have* laboured and suffered. They have *not* been caught in open transgression. They *have* lived decent and respectable lives. And, therefore, we are not led to the paradox of supposing that they will be ultimately excluded from the kingdom of heaven. They are not sent away empty. Nay, they may even receive some consolatory explanation of what seems to them an injustice,—"Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

The parable of the Prodigal is, in this respect, a still further development of this of the Labourers in the Vineyard. It tracks out still more tenderly and delicately the human aspects and relations of these two different modes of service. In the eyes of Him by whom it was spoken nothing was common or unclean. He could raise and dismiss the weeping penitent, but he did not therefore repel the colder Pharisee. He admitted Nicodemus among his disciples. He made his grave in Joseph's tomb.

We fall into opposite errors in reading Scripture and in real life. In the one we allow no kind of merit, no redeeming qualities at all, to that very class of persons who in the other almost monopolize our respect. The truth lies between both extremes. There is room even for the Pharisee in the kingdom of heaven, though from the first he will become last, and from the greatest least. His early call, his life-long service, his regular religious habits, his punc-

tilious payment of his dues, will not prevent him from being forestalled by many whom, living, he had despised. They will be bidden to go up higher, and he will take the lower place with shame. Still he may not murmur at his lot, for he can be no fair judge in his own cause. Rather let him be resigned and prepared for it beforehand, and thankful that he should fare no worse. What he has is sure to be far more than he deserves, and the less mercenary the spirit in which he labours the better it will be for him.

In the highest Christian temper the mercenary element will be entirely wanting. It will be reward enough for him who has it that he should be permitted to work in God's vineyard at all. He will not be casting his eyes this way and that, to see how others are working or when their service begins. He will know that the Lord of the vineyard is no mere contractor who will deal with him after the letter of his bond, but an infinitely kind and loving Father to all who prove themselves his children. God is to us really what we ourselves make Him to be. If we are formalists and legalists we shall be judged by the letter, but to those who love much, much shall be both given and forgiven.

Thus, so far from there being anything partial or unequal in the Divine judgments, they are really the necessary, and, we might almost say, automatic consequences of our own conduct. There may be parts in them that we cannot understand, just as there are parts of our own conduct that we cannot, or at least do not, sufficiently analyse. But these two things are correlative. The seeming anomalies

in the moral government of the world proceed from our ignorance, and not from any failure of Divine justice. That, we may be sure, is absolute and perfect; and if we are wise we shall acquiesce gratefully in its decisions, whether the reasons for them are discovered or concealed. W. SANDAY.

THE VINDICTIVE PSALMS VINDICATED.

PART II.

So far it has been my ungracious task to impugn the various apologies made for the Vindictive Psalms by others. It remains to be seen whether any real solution of the difficulty can be suggested in their stead. The explanation that I have to offer has not the attraction of novelty; perhaps it would be no recommendation if it had. In its main features it may be familiar to some of my readers. I do not know, however, that anything more than its naked outline can be found elsewhere, or that the conclusions to which I have come are in complete accordance with those of any other writer on the subject. [1]

It may be as well to state here what those conclusions are; in other words, what it will be my object in the following pages to prove. They are: That the so-called "vindictive" expressions of the Psalms are only seemingly and not really vindictive; that they seem to be vindictive only because we view them from the standpoint of the New Testament,

[1] It would be scarcely ingenuous were I not to express here my obligations to Professor Perowne's Commentary, and to his Hulsean Lectures. Writing as I do several years after I first read these works, I cannot be sure for what ideas I am indebted to them; but I suspect it is for more than I am now conscious of.

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instead of from the standpoint of the Old; that, read in the light of the Hebrew Scriptures, they are innocent, unexceptionable, and even imitable: in short, that, rudely as they may jar upon our ears and wrong as they would be in our lips, they are, nevertheless, in perfect harmony with the kind and degree of revelation vouchsafed to those who penned them; that they are the natural and, more than that, the commendable outcomes of the system under which the writers lived; that they are as natural to that system and as lawful under it, as they are unnatural and unlawful under a different and more perfect system; and, finally, that they are all this without contravening in the remotest degree those eternal principles of justice and piety and charity which are the foundation of the Old Testament no less than of the New. This is what I shall hope to establish, though I do not engage to prove *these* propositions, either seriatim or formally.

Let us begin by asking two questions: First, What is it that really shocks us in these Psalms—what is the head and front of their offending? Secondly, What would be a valid and incontrovertible defence of them? When, and under what conditions, could they be considered as completely vindicated?

In the Comminatory Psalms—for it will be necessary to take the two classes separately—the chief, if not the only, stumbling-block is the spitefulness, the malignity, the longing (felt to be cherished, if not always expressed) for vengeance upon the Psalmists' enemies which they *seem* to exhibit. It is that the Psalmists appear to anticipate with delight the discomfiture of enemies—their own and their country's

—when these enemies are not necessarily wrong-doers and transgressors of the law of God. We do not resent the Psalmists', any more than we resent the Apostles' or Prophets' denouncing God's judgments against impenitent sinners; we feel it is only proper that they should do *that*. But what grieves and offends us is their identifying, to all appearance, their private enemies with God's enemies, the enemies of right and religion, and their confounding the former in the doom reserved by God for the latter.

Take, for example, Psa. lix. 10, "God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies." Who does not instinctively feel that the writer of these words was hoping to enlist the arm of God against his private foes, was counting on the connivance and help of God in fulfilling his long-cherished hopes of vengeance and retaliation.

The same may be said of what is seemingly the most cruel and malignant of all the Comminations: "Happy shall he be that taketh thy little ones and dasheth them against the stones" (Psa. cxxxvii. 9). The offence lies in the (apparently) fiendish satisfaction with which the writer anticipates the paying off of an old grudge; the paying it off in the blood and butchery of innocent children.

Consequently, before the Comminatory Psalms can be considered as vindicated, these two points must be established: First, that the Psalmist in no case predicates evil of mere private enemies because of real or supposed private injuries, but always of God's enemies, the enemies, that is, of his law, his religion, his chosen people, because

of violations of that law, affronts offered to that religion, or wrongs done to that people; in other words, because of *sins*. Secondly, that, supposing him always to speak of God's enemies, he nowhere predicts a punishment disproportionate to the offence; a punishment, in fact, such as the Merciful God will never inflict. If we can prove these two points—prove that the vengeance, whatever it may be, is pronounced against the wicked, *qua* wicked, and if we can shew at the same time that such vengeance, so far as we can judge, would be, by the law of the older Dispensation, but the meet and equitable recompense for their wickedness, then surely we need have no further misgivings about the *Comminatory* Psalms.

But in the case of the *Imprecatory* expressions, an additional and a much greater difficulty confronts us. Apart from the appearance of vindictiveness, apart from the seeming craving for vengeance which they exhibit in a much greater degree than do the Comminatory Psalms, we have to account for this fact, that the writers deliberately pray God (not to be forbearing or forgiving, but) to be angry, to take vengeance, to inflict punishment—whether on private enemies or on God's enemies seems at first sight to signify very little. For it appears to us, who live under the Dispensation of mercy, to be malicious and uncharitable and every way unbecoming in men who need mercy themselves to urge the Omnipotent *not* to be merciful, but to pour the vials of his wrath even on flagitious sinners. A Christian is taught to pray for the conversion of such men; but the Psalmists pray for

instant and condign punishment. They protest, in fact, against the mercy and forbearance of God; they cry aloud for chastisements upon the sinner; they will have him confounded, persecuted, destroyed, without loss of time.

Consequently, in order to vindicate the Imprecatory Psalms, we shall have to prove, in the first place, that it was lawful and commendable for those who penned them to pray God for vengeance, for the instant temporal punishment of the wicked. And, this point being established, we shall have to prove, as before, that the Psalmists in every case pray for vengeance on the *wicked*, and not on persons who are *merely* private enemies; that they pray only for the due and proportionate punishment of the wicked; and, finally, that, so far as we can judge, they pray for such punishment in no vindictive spirit, but from a sense of duty and a desire for God's honour and glory. If all this can be made good, then surely the Imprecatory Psalms may be considered as for ever eliminated from the list of Scripture difficulties.

Now the major part of these propositions, it is obvious, can only be established by a detailed examination of the various passages which are commonly esteemed to be vindictive. There is one link in the chain of argument, however, and that by far the most important, which must be firmly rivetted in its place before this examination is attempted, and it is this: "That it was lawful and commendable for the Psalmists to pray God for the instant temporal punishment of the wicked," a proposition which can only be proved, if it can be

proved at all, by a consideration of the peculiar character of the Jewish economy, of the nature of the law under which the Psalmists lived. For it will be admitted, I apprehend, by all, that a Christian has no right to pray for the infliction of temporal punishment, much less of certain specific temporal punishments, even upon the most wicked and mischievous of men. If he prays for such persons at all (and they need his prayers), it must be for their conversion. He may perhaps cry to God for their repression, for their confusion, because of the harm they are doing and the malign influence they are exercising. But he cannot pray—Christian charity forbids him to pray—as the Psalmists do, for their destruction. We are driven, consequently, to ask whether there was anything in the Legal Dispensation which made it lawful for a Jew to pray as it is confessedly unlawful for a Christian to pray. In other words, can desires and petitions, which are disallowed by the law of Christ, be allowed and encouraged by the law of Moses? It will be my endeavour to prove the affirmative. And to do this, I must beg the reader to consider with me what the Old Testament revelation really was, or, rather, in the first instance, what it was *not*.

It was, to begin with, *no revelation of a future life*. Account for it as we may, the fact is indisputable, that the sacred writings of the older Dispensation nowhere promise, directly and expressly, a future state of existence. On this capital question their silence is well-nigh absolute. True it is that our Lord Christ, the same who "brought life and immortality to light," has taught *us* to see an intimation of

the Resurrection in the words of Moses "at the bush" (St. Mark xii. 26, 27); but no one can seriously suppose that such a remote "allusion as *that* could have served to make known the doctrine to any one who had previously known nothing of the subject."[1] More than that, this very text, if carefully considered, will be found to furnish a most convincing proof that this magnificent doctrine is nowhere distinctly revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. For, of course, the probability is that our blessed Lord, when appealing to the Old Testament to shew that the Sadducees were wrong "as touching the dead," would cite the most powerful proof which that volume afforded, the one most likely to silence all cavillers. We may presume, therefore, that this text was quoted because it was the most conclusive that could be quoted, because nothing else could be adduced which would carry with it the same amount of force. And yet, what does this text amount to? It merely suggests an *inference* on this doctrine—an inference which we may readily believe the Sadducees would be by no means disposed to accept. For, although, it would seem, they were "put to silence," yet obviously this text would not necessarily be conclusive *with them*. They might have replied—perhaps they did reply—that the expression "I am the God of Abraham," &c., "did not necessarily mean more than that Jehovah had been the God of those patriarchs whilst they lived."[2] We find, then, that the scripture cited by our blessed Lord to prove not merely the survival of the soul but also

[1] Whately, "Scripture Revelations concerning a Future State."
[2] Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," art. "Sadducees."

the resurrection of the body, and which, it is a fair presumption, was the most cogent that could be adduced in this behalf, is not obviously conclusive on either of these points. And therefore we claim, on the authority of Christ Himself, that the doctrine of eternal life, if taught inferentially, is nowhere taught expressly in the Old Testament.[1] But a scarcely less powerful proof of the silence or uncertainty of the Law and the Prophets on this great question is to be found in the existence of these very Sadducees, a sect which embraced the Jewish aristocracy and which furnished the nation with many of its High Priests, every member of which, however, affirmed that there was no resurrection of the dead. We know that all men naturally, and especially men in whom the religious instincts are so powerfully developed as they were in every scion of the Hebrew race, a race, be it remembered, of priests, a consecrated nation (Exod. xix. 6), desire to believe in a life beyond the grave. Moreover, it is the interest of a priestly caste, such as the Sadducees are suspected to have been, to hold and inculcate such a doctrine. What so likely to enhance their importance in the eyes of their co-religionists? what so calculated to strengthen their position in Church and State? We may be perfectly sure then, that if Jews, if Sadducean priests, if High Priests, generation after generation, persistently repudiated this doctrine, it was only because their convictions compelled them to repudiate it against their will; only because they

[1] "In Mosis lege . . . aeternae vitae non fieri mentionem nisi per umbras aut rationis consequentiam, certissimum mihi videtur, *Christi auctoritate*, qui Sadducaeos non verbis directis sed *ratiocinando* refellit."—*Grotius.*

found no evidence in the written Law which would warrant them in embracing it. It is absolutely impossible that such a sect could have maintained its existence if the Sacred Writings had contained one clear unequivocal proof-text of a future state. The *raison d'être* of the Sadducees was that the tenets of the Future Life and the Resurrection could not be discovered (as certain modern Jews confess)[1] in Holy Writ, and had no better basis than "the tradition of the Elders."

But, furthermore, have we not direct and positive proof that some of the sacred writers, some of the Psalmists for example, had no assurance, no *certainty*, of a future state of being? Is it conceivable that men possessing any such assurance could have expressed themselves as these have done? What mean these words, "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the unseen world who shall give thee thanks?" (Psa. vi. 5); and, again, "Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Psa. lxxxviii. 11.)[2] What mean these words if those who penned them had had a future state of conscious existence revealed to their view? I do not by any means contend that these expressions involve a denial of such future state, or are incompatible with a *hope* of the soul's survival; but I say it

[1] Klein, "Le Judaisme," p. 15 (quoted in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible").

[2] See also Psalms xxx. 9, cxv. 17, cxlvi. 4; and Isa. xxxviii. 18 *ff.* "On the whole they [the passages quoted from the Psalms] leave an impression of a final triumph of death, of the annihilation of consciousness."—"Speaker's Commentary," vol. iv. pp. 161, 162.

is hard to conceive how they could have been written by men who were *certified* of these imperious truths. We must admit, of course, that the Jews, like other nations of antiquity,[1] had their speculations, their traditions perhaps, upon this question. The very words "Sheol" (*Orcus*, *Hades*, the invisible world) and "Rephaim" (*Manes*, ghosts) justify the belief that they had some dim confused ideas of a disembodied state, ideas similar to those of Homer and the Orphic Hymns. Nor is it denied, again, that some of the Psalmists and others were at times lifted above themselves, and from the Pisgah-top of Inspiration had momentary glimpses of a Promised Land beyond the grave.[2] But it is distinctly affirmed that even they—with perhaps some rare exceptions—had no *certain* information on the question; none which would warrant them in erecting their hope, their undefined belief, their persuasion perhaps, into an article of the faith. And if this was true of the elect spirits of Judaism, the channels of inspiration, the men by whose mouths God spake to other men, still less can we believe that the Hebrew people generally at the time when most of the Psalms were written, maintained a firm belief in a future life, or found it revealed in such Scriptures as they possessed. I am not unaware that many, perhaps most, divines have affirmed the contrary; but I cannot divest myself of the feeling that we have, in their laboured treatises,[3]

[1] For the Greek traditions on this subject, see the *Contemporary Review*, August 1872. For their evidential value, Whately, "Scripture Revelations."

[2] See, *e.g.*, Psalms xvi. 10, xvii. 15, xlix. 15; and compare St. John viii. 56, Heb. xi. 10–14.

[3] See, *e.g.*, Dr. Liddon's Sermon on Immortality. "Hibbard on the Psalms," pp. 78-100. Geden's Fernley Lecture.

conclusive proof of the instability of their views. They ransack the whole of the Old Testament in search of proof-texts,—and what is the result? The result is that we have presented to us some dozen dubious expressions, all of which are capable of a very different interpretation from that which these writers have put upon them. It is not necessary that we should enter into an examination of these texts, though I am prepared to do so, if occasion should require it, because my contention is, that the very fewness and the very dubiousness of the texts relied on to prove their position disprove it. "The institution," says Whichcote, "which has but one text for it, has never a one." For can any one suppose for a moment that if men had once been certified of a life after death, that a doctrine so startling, so portentous, so pregnant with consequences, would not have made itself prominent in Jewish history and stamped itself on every page of Scripture? Is it possible that Prophets and Psalmists could have written as they have written, consistently ignoring the doctrine of a future life, if such a doctrine had been objectively revealed, or anyhow firmly believed in? Besides, it is worth while remembering that the Jews had been in contact, in close contact, with one nation at least whose religious belief embraced and centred in the doctrine of a future state of existence. This was the case with the Egyptians. The silence of the Hebrew Scriptures on this subject, consequently, is all the more striking. It is thus proved that their silence cannot be accidental. The doctrine must have been designedly suppressed in the revelation of Sinai, for "to pass over a matter of this kind is to

reject it."[1] Why it was passed over it is not difficult, I think, to discover; but this is a question which it is no part of my present undertaking to consider. It is enough for us that the doctrine was not revealed. The Jews were left to conjectures. Certainty they had none.[2]

But if the revelation granted to the Hebrew race contained in it no doctrine of a future state of being, still less did it involve the disclosure of a future state of rewards and punishments. And it is upon its silence on this latter subject that I ground my defence of the Vindictive Psalms. The uncertainty of the Jews as to a Future *Life* is not a necessary link in my chain of argument, though it helps to strengthen my position. I might freely concede that the Psalmists were certified of an existence hereafter, provided it were proved, as I

[1] Zincke, "Egypt of the Pharaohs and the Khedive," p. 182.

[2] As the views expressed above may seem to some of my readers to be novel and irregular, it may be well to cite a few contemporary writers, whose words will carry more weight than any of mine can possibly do. "The Jewish religion," says Dean Stanley ("Jewish Church," vol. i p. 154), "is characterized in an eminent degree by the dimness of its conception of a future life. From time to time there are glimpses of the hope of immortality; but, for the most part, it is in the present life that the faith of the Israelite finds its full accomplishment."——"The immortality of the soul," writes Dr. Perowne (Hulsean Lectures, on "Immortality," p. 63), "is neither argued nor affirmed [in the Old Testament]. Darkness rests on the grave and all beyond it." Again (p. 67): "So far as any distinct knowledge of a future life went, the Jew had no advantage over the Gentile."——"It is clear that no distinct knowledge of a future state of retribution had as yet [the age of the Psalmists] been vouchsafed to the Israelites. . . . To the generality of the people, the grave, or the unknown Sheol, of which the grave was the entrance, bounded the region of hope and fear; whatever they might conjecture touching the state after death, few indeed appear to have distinctly realized it as a state of consciousness, or one to be followed by restoration."—Canon Cook in the "Speaker's Commentary," vol. iv. p. 161.——"No objective revelation had as yet

think it can be, conclusively, that they were completely ignorant of any retribution hereafter. I say "conclusively," for this is a position on which, I should imagine, there is but little room for any difference of opinion. The proof *e silentio* is complete. The Holy Scriptures, down to the time of the Captivity, at any rate, afford us not the slightest hint of any requital awaiting men after death. Not even from the Psalms or the Prophets can one clear unmistakable *dictum probans* be adduced. And that this affirmation is neither new nor singular, the testimonies cited at the foot of this page will prove.[1] It is needless to multiply such authorities, for it rests, of course, with those who maintain that the Psalmists *did* know of a judgment and a punishment hereafter to point out to us *where* these doctrines are revealed.

been vouchsafed. What the Psalmists believed or hoped for touching the future state in or after Sheol was, so far as we can judge, even to the last, a subjective conviction."—*Ib.* p. 162.——"Generally speaking, the Hebrews regarded the grave as the final end of all sentient and intelligent existence."—Dr. F. W. Farrar, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," art. "Hell."

[1] "Moses in religionis Judaicae institutione . . . nihil promisit supra hujus vitae bona, terram uberem, penum copiosum," &c.—Grotius. ——"In tota lege Mosaica," writes Episcopius, "nullum vitae æternae praemium ac ne aeterni quidem praemii indicium vel vestigium extat." ——"Vel in his libris [the Psalms, Daniel, and Ezekiel] clarum ac disertum aeternae vitae praemium vix, ac ne vix quidem, reperias."—Bishop Bull.——"C'est le comble d'ignorance de mettre en doute cette vérité, qui est une des plus communes de la religion Chrétienne et qui est attestée par tous les Pères, que les promesses de l'Ancien Testament n'étaient que temporelles et terrestres."—Arnauld.——(I am indebted for these authorities to Warburton, "Div. Leg." vol. ii. pp. 463-465.) ——And, again, "The rewards and punishments of the future life are either unknown or exercise no practical influence."—*Ib.* p. 63.——"I am not aware that there is a single passage in the Old Testament which represents the unseen world as a place of punishment for the ungodly."—Perowne, Hulsean Lectures, p. 71.

We see, then, that the faith delivered to the writers of the Psalms embraced neither the doctrine of a future life nor the doctrine of a future recompense. Let us now regard it from its positive side and see what it did proclaim. It proclaimed, and that again and again, and in every conceivable way, the doctrine of a Particular Providence, of a present God impartially dealing out rewards and punishments to men in this present life. More than that, it established, as the law of this Providence, an elaborate system of temporal recompenses. It gave the Jews a code, the rule at once of their civil and their religious life. For every transgression of that code, a punishment, a "just recompense of reward" was provided. But the sanctions of that code were one and all temporal.[1] Its retributions were meted out to men *precisely as if there were no hereafter.* Its language was, from first to last, "Thy days shall be long in the land;" "Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store;" "I will take sickness away from the midst of thee;" "Thou shalt see thy children's children;" or, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" "That thief shall die;" "The elders of the city shall take that man and chastise him;" "The people of the land shall stone him with stones;" and so forth. Everywhere, that is to say, even in the terrible comminations of Levit. xxvi. and Deut. xxix., where the judgments of God are denounced in detail, and where, if anywhere, the terrors of the world to come might have been looked for, we have temporal recompenses, and

1 "Lex promissa habuit terrena et terrena tantum."—Bishop Bull ——"All the sanctions of the Law were temporal, not eternal."—Bishop Harold Browne.

these alone. Even in the prayer of Solomon, again, at the dedication of the Temple, an occasion when, if "eternal judgment" had formed an article of the national faith, it would assuredly have found a mention, only temporal blessings are sought, only temporal chastisements are deprecated. The fact, then, is indisputable that everywhere, throughout the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Prophets, the "strength of Israel" stands pledged to purely temporal requital.

And this, no doubt, we may remark in passing, is one reason why the Old Testament Scriptures contain no revelation of the recompenses of the future. They could not have contained any such revelation, without contradicting or impairing the belief in the Theocracy, in a real and practical government of the race by God. The supremacy of Israel's invisible King, and the execution of his laws, were secured by a system of *temporal* rewards and punishments; a scheme of *future* retribution and recompenses could hardly have been established co-ordinately or even concurrently with this, except at the risk of weakening its sanctions and compromising its authority. Indeed, it was the gradual rise of a belief in a future life and a judgment after death which ultimately accomplished its overthrow.

But there are one or two features of the Mosaic system which, as they will force themselves upon our notice hereafter, it may be as well to consider here. The first is, that it was a system of strict and literal *retaliation;* in other words, it was a *lex talionis.* Its keynote was the precept which, it is worth observing, occurs under slightly different forms three times (Exod. xxi. 23–25; Levit. xxiv. 20; Deut. xix. 21),

"Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." In this emphatic way was the Jew taught to give and to seek redress, even for private wrongs, on the broad principle of "like for like." But more than that, this same code had its "nicely calculated less and more." Its sanctions were on a graduated scale. Sometimes it prescribed simple restitution (Exod. xxi. 35; xxii. 12), sometimes payment of the person injured "for the loss of his time" (xxi. 19), or payment "as the judges determine" (verse 22). At another time the wrongdoer must "restore the principal" and "add the *fifth part* more thereto" (Leviticus v. 16; vi. 5). The thief must in certain cases "restore *double*" (Exod. xxii. 4), while transgressors of another type should be repaid *sevenfold* (Leviticus xxvi. 18, 21, 24, 28). The Jew then was encouraged by the law under which he lived to look, not merely for retribution, but for retaliation (in the primary sense of the word); for the exact and proportionate recompense, in kind and degree, of wrong and crime.

It is also to be noticed here that there were a considerable number of offences to which the law of Moses assigned no less a penalty than death. Sometimes it was death by fire (Leviticus xxi. 9), sometimes death by stoning (Deut. xiii. 10), sometimes death by the visitation of God (Leviticus xvii. 10), but the number of cases obnoxious to capital punishment in one shape or other is almost startling. (See, *e.g.*, Leviticus vii. 20, 25, 27; xviii. 29; xx. *passim.*) Yet it could not well be otherwise. For one who knew nothing of a judgment to come, the

Law could have no higher sanction, could propose no severer penalty, than "sudden destruction." Just as "length of days" was its highest recompense, so would premature and violent death be its most dreaded doom. The Jew, then, was warranted by the Mosaic code in anticipating for certain offenders the expiation of their crime in blood. The cases were many in which it could be said with perfect truth, "We have a law, and by our law he ought *to die*."

We must now proceed to remark that the Dispensation we are considering, not only threatened the contumacious Israelite with temporal pains and penalties, but it also made abundant provision for their exaction. Sometimes the chastisement came direct from an avenging Deity (*e.g.*, Jeremiah iii. 3; Haggai i. 9), but God also had his "ministers attending continually upon this very thing." The Hebrew judges, for example, were appointed that they might be the dispensers of the Divine requital. To the kings again, as God's vicegerents in the Theocracy, was delegated the punishment of evil-doers. The witnesses of sin, the elders of the city, and, in some cases, the whole population, were charged with the correction of immorality and apostacy. The sword of neighbouring states, the noisome beast, the famine, the pestilence, and even the palmer-worm, the locust, and the caterpillar were made the scourges of idolatry and rebellion. In all these ways did the *digitus Dei* work and manifest itself amongst the chosen people. The temporal punishments, that is to say, denounced by the Law and the Prophets, the Providence of God, either directly or instrumentally, visited upon the evil-doer.

Such, then, so far as it concerns our present purpose to examine it, was the revelation vouchsafed to the Jew; such was the position to which the Hebrew people, in the age of the Psalmists, had attained in that gradual development of doctrine and belief, which has apparently been going on from the first, and which is the principal factor in the gradual progress of the human race. They knew of no future state of rewards and punishments, but they believed in one Omnipresent and over-ruling Deity, by whose direct and immediate supervision the present life was made a state of rewards and punishments. They looked, each one of them, for a full settlement of their account with Him before the day of death. They believed that by means of kings and magistrates, fire and sword, lightning and tempest, pestilence and famine, blasting and mildew, caterpillar and locust, He had designed that "every transgression and disobedience" should "receive a just recompense of reward" (Heb. ii. 2). They did not know that if these scourges of Providence failed to reach every transgressor there was still a full requital, a recompense for every thought and word and deed, awaiting all hereafter. They could not have known this except at the risk of weakening their idea of temporal retribution, of imperilling their belief in a living, avenging, and swiftly-recompensing God.

But how this bears on the Vindictive Psalms; how it helps to prove that it "was lawful for the Psalmists to pray for the instant temporal punishment of the wicked," it must remain for a future issue of THE EXPOSITOR to shew.

JOSEPH HAMMOND.

LIFE AND DEATH AS ANTAGONISTS OF LOVE.

ROMANS viii. 38, 39.

An able and ingenious critic proposes to read the sentence thus: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor *even* life, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is questionable whether the Greek will bear that rendering; but there can be no question that the thought which it suggests is true, although it contradicts a very general and familiar persuasion. We all admit that, in a certain sense, both Life and Death are antagonists of Love; but if we were asked, Which is the greater antagonist of the two? most of us would answer, "Death; not Life:" whereas it is Life, not Death, which is the more fatal to Love. Life is often the death of Love; whereas Death commonly gives Love new life.

"Who," or "what," demands the Apostle, "shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And in his reply he gives us two catalogues of the various powers and influences which we fear as likely to weaken or to alienate our love from Him in whose love we live. In his first catalogue he enumerates, "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, sword;" in his second catalogue he enumerates, "death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present and things to come, height and depth." As we follow and consider his words, the first catalogue presents no difficulty to our thoughts; we feel, we acknowledge, that the rigours of pain, want, hunger, danger have often strangled love; we forbode that, were we long exposed to them, our love might die.

But the second catalogue is more difficult: we ask, for instance, How should "height" or "depth," or, again, How should "angels," separate us from the love of Christ? And it is not until we perceive that St. Paul is indulging in one of those passionate and rhetorical outbursts which are characteristic of his style that his words shoot into light. But then, when we seize this clue and follow it, we understand that, in the rapture and exaltation of his spirit, he defies all heaven and earth to extinguish, or even to lessen, his love for Christ, or Christ's love for him: the very "angels and principalities" of heaven, supposing them capable of the endeavour, could not shake him from his rest, nor all the "powers" of hell,—no vicissitudes of time, whether "present" or "to come," nor aught within the bounds, the "heights and depths," of space. Strong in the love of Christ, he is more than conqueror over them all. "Death" cannot move him, although it introduce him into new and untried regions of existence; nor "even life" itself, although life is the severer test of love and has often proved its death.

This is the general scope and intention of St. Paul in the passage before us: and, taken thus—in this order, in this sense—it carries us back to the point at which we started, viz., that both Death and Life are in some sort to be feared as the antagonists of Love, but that Life is by far the stronger and more deadly antagonist of the two.

Now that men fear Death, as likely to separate them from the love of God, to impair their union with Him, or, perchance, to put them beyond his reach, is beyond a doubt. There is nothing which

most men fear so much as death; nothing, alas, which most Christians fear so much. We have an instinctive and natural dread of it, which even faith finds it hard to conquer, to which our imperfect faith often lends an additional force. It is not only the darkness and decay of the tomb that we dread; it is also the judgment which lies beyond the tomb. It is not only that we are loth to part with those whom we love; we also fear lest, in the pangs of death, we should relax the grasp of faith. And hence, in our Service for the Dead, we use a prayer than which few are more pathetic: "O Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal, *suffer us not at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee.*" A most pathetic, and yet, as we often mean it, a most un-Christian prayer! For what we too commonly imply by it is that if, amid the pangs of dissolution and the darkness of death, we should cease to see God by faith and to put our trust in Him, He will forsake us! that if, oppressed by mortal weakness, we loosen our hold upon Him, He will let us fall! that at the very crisis, and in the very circumstance, in which an earthly friend would strengthen his comforting grasp on us, our heavenly Friend will relax his grasp and let us drop into the darkness which waits to devour us up! Whereas Christ has taught us that God's help is nearest when we most need his help, that He perfects his strength in our weakness, that our redemption from all evil depends, not in our fluctuating sense of his Presence, nor on our imperfect love for Him, but in his being with us although we know it not, and his eternal unbounded love for us.

Indeed our whole conception of Death is in much un-Christian. We do not realize, as we might and should, that for us death means life and immortality, a nearer access to God, a clearer vision of his glory, a more perfect participation of his grace and peace. We have so little faith in God and in his wise ordering of the universe that we can hardly rise to the level of Schiller's fine saying, "Death happens to all, and cannot therefore be an evil." We persist in taking it as an evil, although we know, or might know, it to be a good.

Let us consider for a moment how the case stands, and learn once more how baseless are our terrors, how faithless and irrational our tears. There are perhaps twenty millions of men living and moving in England at this day: but how many millions on millions lie beneath its soil? If, instead of sleeping in the earth, the dead were laid upon its surface,—where could we plant a foot without profaning their ashes? More than two thousand years ago the Romans had a suggestive periphrasis for death. When they lost a friend, instead of saying, "He is dead," they said, "He has gone over to the majority." The majority! Yes, and how vast a majority! how populous is the mighty kingdom of the dead! *And yet we dare weep for them!* Might not they much more reasonably weep for us? If we believe that God cares for the few millions now on the face of the earth, can we believe that He does not care for the innumerable millions who have not passed from his sight because they have passed from ours? If He cares for the small minority who now inhabit the world, must He not

care for that vast majority who, for aught we know, may still be in this world, though they are invisible to us? If *we* are not separated, can *they* be separated, from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord and theirs? It is incredible. To despair of the dead is to distrust God. To fear death is even more unreasonable than to fear life.

Let us take an argument as well as an illustration from our own experience. What does *that* teach us of Death and Life as Antagonists of Love? Death *is* an antagonist of Love: for it takes from us those whom we have learned to love: it separates us from them; we can no longer see them, and serve them, and lavish on them the tokens and proofs of our regard. But though death severs us and them, does it sever *love?* does it extinguish, or even lessen, our affection for them? Does it not rather enlarge, refine, consecrate our love for them? They take a special dearness and sanctity in our thoughts. We forget what was lacking or imperfect in them. We think only of their better qualities, of how good they were, how staunch, how kind. There never was a true love yet which did not conquer death, which death did not hallow and deepen and make perfect. But does *Life* always elevate love and enlarge and sanctify it? We know that there is no such searching and crucial test of love as life, with its monotonous toils and cares, its vicissitudes and provocations, its inevitable differences of view and collisions of will. Whereas Death confirms and hallows love, Life often diminishes and desecrates it. Many who stood before the altar with a strong and sincere affection for each other have afterward gone, by

different paths, with alienated hearts, to distant graves. Life, with its cares and disappointments, its constant friction of will with will, mood with mood, temper with temper, has snapped the bonds which Death would have soldered close for ever.

And as with human love, so with love Divine. *Death* cannot detach our love from God; for it brings us closer to Him; it shews Him to us more nearly as He is, and thus constrains us to a more profound, a more constant and perfect love for Him. But *Life*, with its anxieties and toils, its trials and temptations, is for ever calling our thoughts away from Him, teaching us to forget or to distrust Him, inspiring us with motives, affections, aims, alien and opposed to his will. If we have any true spiritual life in us,—is not this the very burden of our confessions and prayers, that we do not love Him as we ought and would; that we are not like Him; that, while He is righteous, we are unrighteous, while He is kind, we are unkind; that even when we would do good, the evil in us overcomes the good: and that we are thus becoming more and more unworthy of his love, more and more unworthy to live with Him and to abide in his House? Alas, no sooner do we consider ourselves than we find that, if we fear Death, we have much more reason to fear Life, and its power to alienate us from God and Christ! The more we consider and know ourselves the more welcome to us grows St. Paul's persuasion, that neither death, nor even life itself, is able to separate us from the love of God; that, if our love for Him be cordial and sincere, however imperfect it may be, it will nevertheless conquer all the opposing forces of Life no less than all the powers of Death.

And St. Paul's persuasion may well be at least our *hope*. For if death cannot lessen our love of man or woman, although it separates us from them, —how should death lessen our love for God when, instead of separating us from Him, it conducts us to his Presence, unites us more intimately with Him, shews us more perfectly how good He is, how worthy of our love? Life, indeed, is more perilous than Death: but for every case in which we see the inevitable cares and collisions of life alienate two loving hearts, we may see a score in which they only bind them into a closer and more sacred unity. And God, remember, has none of those defects of character which alienate us from men and women whom once we held dear. To love Him is to love righteousness, truth, goodness, gentleness, peace. He is at once the Ideal and the Incarnation of all excellence. We shall never, as we grow wiser and more experienced, discover anything in *Him* to lessen our love and reverence. The danger lies in our own defects, in our partial knowledge of Him, in the instability of our best affections, in our too frequent preference of a love inferior to his, of a good less complete and satisfying than that which He bestows. Happily, He knows us altogether. Happily, He suffers long and is kind; He is very forbearing and of a most tender mercy. If once we truly love Him, if our hearts are really set on goodness and truth and charity, He will forgive our inconstancy, our imperfections and defects; He will use the infinite resources of his wisdom and power and grace to develop our love, to supply our defects, to chasten us from our faults, to make us what we

would be, to lift us into an unwavering constancy, an eternal righteousness and peace. Weak and inconstant as we are, we may at least *hope* that He will not suffer even life itself to separate us from Him.

Thus far, however, we have taken the phrase "love of Christ" or "love of God" as denoting *our* love for them. It may also cover *their* love for us. Some Commentators affirm, indeed, that the question of verse 35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" means, "Who shall detach *our* love from Christ?" and that the assertion of verse 39, that nothing shall "separate us from the love of God in Christ," means that nothing will ever alienate *their* love from us. The exegesis is doubtful; but the thought to which it gives expression is beyond all doubt. Our conception of this passage will not be complete unless it embrace both these ideas. For our love to God depends on his love for us. If his love can be shaken, our love will not abide. And, therefore, we may be sure that—somewhere in the passage, perhaps throughout it—St. Paul meant to speak of God's love for us as well as of our love for Him. And of his love for us we need have no doubt, whatever becomes of ours for Him. Even at our best we may only be able to *hope* that our love will not change; but we may know beyond all question that, even if our love should change, God's will not. Nothing can by any means separate us from that. Whom He loves, He loves to the end; for there is no end to his love. What power can Death, or even Life, have over *Him?* Death may separate *us* from those who are dear to us; Life may estrange us from them: but how can Death separate any soul from

Him? or how can the vicissitudes of Life estrange Him from any soul of man? His kingdom includes all; it lies on both sides the grave, this and that. The dead live to Him; to Him the living die. We are the offspring of his love; for if He did not love us, and design our good, why should He have made us? And those He once loves, He loves for ever. He *is* Love; He cannot deny Himself.

But we must not limit and measure his love by our own, although our love is the best image of his and our best help toward understanding Him. It does not follow that, because He loves all his creatures with a love over which neither Life nor Death has any power, that they will all be happy, or even that they will all ultimately be blessed with life eternal. His love, simply because it seeks the welfare of all, can be very stern. So can our love be; so *is* our love, in proportion as it is wise and strong. We can correct our children for their good; we can expose them to much pain, compel them to toils which they dislike, and even permit them to misconceive and distrust us. If we see a poor bird in incurable agony, we can crush it out of its pain because we love it. Because we love it, we can shoot a dog or a horse, when it is hopelessly diseased. If we see a child incurably vicious, or a man utterly brutalized and degraded, we can say, "Well for him that he had never been born!" Even while our hearts tremble with awe and pity we can send the irredeemable criminal to death, or to a life more hard and cruel than death. It is our very love for men, and even for the wretched criminal himself, which gives us strength to pronounce such a doom upon

him. To hang a man may be the worst use to which we can put him; but if he will not be put to any better use, that worst use may be the best of which he is any longer capable.

Love can bear pain, then, bear even to inflict pain, if the love be pure and deep and strong. And God's love is perfect. It is pure and deep and strong beyond our thoughts. It shines a stedfast Light through all the changes of Life, through all the separations of Death; for it shines down from a heaven above their reach. Because his love is so pure, so enduring, so inexhaustible, it can take forms of correction; because it seeks our good, it can inflict the discipline, the toils and pains, which make us good. *It may be* that even as our love despairs of some of his wounded and degraded creatures, and thrusts them out of this life, so He may see that some men need even sterner corrections than this life affords, and that some, wholly incorrigible, must be destroyed from his Presence and the glory of his power. But, however that may be, we may be sure of this, that nothing can separate any soul of man from his love, whether in life or in death. And in this lies our hope, our rest. God's love cannot change, however we change. If his infinite Love *can* recover us to life and righteousness and peace, we shall be recovered: if we are irrecoverable, what better proof of his love can He give us than to put us out of our misery and degradation in the thick darkness of an eternal death? So long as we have any love for Him, any craving for goodness, for truth, for peace, we must be recoverable—nay, we have the witness in ourselves that we are being recovered by his

grace; and therefore so long as we love Him, we may be fully persuaded, with St. Paul, that neither death, nor even life, can possibly separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But before we can *rest* in this persuasion, we must know and feel that *we* love Him who first loved us. We cannot rest in the mere conviction that He loves us; for, as we have seen, his love may compel Him to chasten and afflict our souls in life and in death: it *may* even compel Him, if we prove incorrigible, to destroy us out of our misery. If we would be sure that we shall never sink until we become "unworthy of life eternal," we must now and here lay hold of that life. For, obviously, we have no right to count on any future grace if we neglect the grace which is now bestowed upon us. Obviously, if we do not improve our present opportunities, if by neglecting and abusing them we harden and deteriorate in character, we lessen our power of using any opportunities which the future may bring. If we are not to stake our all on an ominous Peradventure, if we are to have any grounded persuasion, any hope even, of future life and virtue and blessedness, we must faithfully employ our present means of grace; we must now form at least those rudiments of character which are to be developed hereafter. We shall want God's love when we die, and when we pass through death into the unknown region which lies beyond its farther bourn; but how can we hope to have it then, and to delight in it, if we put it from us now and shrink even from thinking too much about it? Take an untutored child of the streets into an elegant and refined home; constrain him to adapt himself to the

habits which use has made second nature to you; lavish on him the delicate signs of courtesy and affection which culture has taught you to appreciate; breathe round him an atmosphere of order, purity, gentleness, love; and the poor outcast will simply hate and resent the change; at the very first chance he will fly back to his old habits of life. And, in like manner, it may very well be that, when we pass out of this rude world, if we should find ourselves in the presence of an Infinite Love; if we should find ourselves within a kingdom of heavenly order and purity and peace, it may very well be that the light of that Love will kindle on us like a fire, if we are strangers to it, and all that sweet order and concord and stainless purity be simply intolerable to us. If we are sensual, sordid, selfish here, how can we hope, all at once, to relish that which is spiritual, noble, unselfish, Divine? Before we can be persuaded that nothing shall ever separate us from the love of God, and can rest and delight in that persuasion, we must be made partakers of the Divine Nature, *i.e.*, of the Divine Character; the baser self in us, which delights in sensuous pleasures, in sordid gains, in the pursuit of self-interest and self-indulgence, must be brought into subjection to that better self which delights itself in the Almighty, which attaches itself to that which is spiritual, which craves to bring a Divine order and beauty and peace into our whole nature and into the world around us.

If we ask: "But *how* is this Divine Character to be attained? how are we to rise into this better self and to mortify that in us which is base and sordid and selfish?" St. Paul replies, "You must have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts." Now

many of these New Testament phrases about "love" have sunk into so mere a cant that, possibly, St. Paul's answer is no answer to many of us, simply because it conveys no clear thought to our minds. But if we consider it for ourselves, if we shake it free from the cant that has stuck to it, we shall find it a very clear and pertinent answer. For what, after all, is it which tells most on human character? Is it not love? Does any other passion change and elevate and hallow character like this, and make a man a new and a better man? When it is not a mere craving of the senses, nor even a mere longing for sympathy, nor both combined,—*i.e.*, when it is true genuine love, does it not conquer the baser and selfish instincts of the soul? has it not, again and again, drawn men from their vices, lifted them out of the mire of self-indulgence, and infused into them a power which has transfigured their whole nature and raised them into a pure and noble life?

But what *is* this love? what is the secret of its power? Is not all true love at bottom an admiration of excellence and a desire to possess it? The woman sees in the man, or thinks she sees, a larger, stronger, firmer character than her own—less at the mercy of impulse, able to stand against the blows of circumstance and the shocks of change,—a fairness, a justice, a quiet strength on which she can lean, and which will save her from her own defects. And the man sees in the woman a character more delicate and refined, more pure, more flexible than his own, more open to "melting charity," more patient under pain, more tender and yielding;—in short, a character which is the complement of his own, rich in all he wants, yet receptive of all that he can give. The

manly vigour and beauty, and the womanly comeliness and grace, which at first attract us, are the mere outward signs of these moral characteristics; and Love interprets them, and the man grows dear to the woman, and the woman to the man, in proportion as their reading of each other proves true, in proportion as they find in each other the qualities they hoped to find.

But if love for man or woman can thus change and elevate the character, why not love for God? If love be indeed an admiration of excellences we do not possess and a desire to complete our nature by appropriating them, the love of God must be simply the most transforming and elevating of all emotions: for in God are all excellences, human and divine. We cannot for very reverence say that God is more tender than a woman and stronger than a man; for to his tenderness there is no limit, to his strength no bounds. He is fair and kind, He is tender and true, He is wise and strong beyond our farthest reach of thought. If we have any love of excellence, we cannot but love Him so soon as we really know Him.

How, then, may we know Him? and so know Him that we may love Him? and so love Him as that nothing, neither Death, nor even Life, can separate us from his love? St. Paul suggests a reply in the words, "the love of God, *which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" If we would know God and love Him, we must find Him in Christ, in that Perfect Man—so strong and yet so gentle, so true yet so tender —who moves before us in the Gospels. Is it difficult to love *Him?* It is not difficult to admire and praise Him. There is hardly the man in Christendom who does not do that. Even those who reject his claim to be one with the Father, even those who

hold the Gospel to be but a late and imperfect tradition overlaid with many incredible fables, even those whose keen eyes detect flaws in his character and teaching,—even these admit that no man ever lived or spake like Him, that He is, beyond all rivalry, the wisest and best of the sons of men. It is not hard, then, to admire and praise Christ; but to love Him *is* hard: for *that* takes faith. We often think of faith simply as an organ by which we perceive things to come; but faith also makes the past real and vital to us. Faith is the shaping spiritual imagination which, as we read the Gospels, makes Christ live and speak, which detects the God in Him, which teaches us that his love is nothing less than Divine.

So that, as the conclusion of the whole matter, we come to this: that, if we would have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, we must faithfully study the Gospels which reveal Christ to us. As we study them in faith, as Christ shapes Himself to us, not as the central figure of an historical painting, but as a Man among men, *the* Man of men; as we see how strong He was against evil and yet how tender to men, not despairing even of the vilest, but full of an exquisite, pathetic, and redeeming hope for them, the conviction will grow upon us that his love was in very deed the love of God, that God loves us as Christ loved men, and *will not* despair of us or give us up. And when once this conviction is reached, we must be other and less than men if we do not respond to his love with a love that will be the beginning of a new life in us, a life from which nothing can by any means separate us, whether within or beyond the bounds of time and space. CARPUS.

THE ANGELS ASCENDING AND DESCENDING ON THE SON OF MAN.

ST. JOHN i. 52.

THAT something more or less mysterious was intended by our Lord in his last words to Nathanael may be gathered from the connection in which they stand. For it is evident that our Lord laid Himself out, if I may say so reverently, to astonish Nathanael, and to take, as it were, by storm, without any preliminary investment, the citadel of his guileless mind. This is but one instance out of many of the extreme diversity and originality with which He dealt with different characters, because He knew what was in man and could exactly adapt Himself to it. It would seem in this case that, as He had begun with the declaration of something startling and, humanly-speaking, inexplicable ("When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee"), so He would go on in a similar strain with something yet more strange and profound. Had Nathanael felt himself upon that abrupt announcement to be in the presence of some incarnate Mystery? He should presently come to know that the Prophet of Nazareth was a Mystery far more sublime than he could then imagine: he should see the angels of God ascending and descending upon that Son of Man.

Now we may be sure that at that time Nathanael did not know what it was that our Lord promised him; but no doubt he afterwards came to understand the meaning of it; and we, too, may surely expect to understand it, for otherwise it would not have been recorded. Nevertheless, opinions are not a

little divided on the subject, and there are, at least, three lines of possible interpretation.

I. It may be said that at the Day of Doom all nations shall see the Judge accompanied and surrounded by the angel hosts; and that our Lord here tacitly contrasts the striking glory of his future coming with the outward meanness of his then appearing. Against this we might set as decisive the ἀπ' ἄρτι, "hereafter" (or, rather, "henceforth"), were it certainly in the Original; for it clearly refers to future time, and not to one particular point in future time. But the balance of Manuscript authority seems to be slightly against the retention of the word, although it is hard to suggest any reason why it should have been interpolated. Apart from this very possible and decisive addition, however, the passage itself lends little countenance to the interpretation in question. For this interpretation gives no meaning to the "ascending" and "descending" here spoken of; and it deprives the promise of any special reference to Nathanael and other "guileless" souls, for *all* men shall see the Judge coming in his glory with his holy angels; and that sight is ever spoken of rather as the conviction and terror of unbelief than as the privilege and confirmation of faith.

II. It is said by many (perhaps by most of the Commentators) that the allusion is to those apparitions of angels, in the Garden, at the Resurrection, at the Ascension, of which mention is made by the Evangelists. I confess that this appears to me extremely weak, for I do not see any probability that Nathanael ever saw an angel in his

life,—or, if he did, it was not when our Lord was present. It is, indeed, evident from the Gospel record that no eye of man beheld the angels of the Desert, or the angel of the Agony: their ministry was a secret one, just as the consolations of God always are to the soul exhausted with conflict or wrung with anguish. Again, it is evident that no eyes save those of the faithful women saw the angels of the Resurrection: they were invisible to the less refined and "sublimated" vision of the two Apostles who visited the tomb; and even to the holy women they appeared so uncertainly that to some they seemed as two, to others as a single angel.[1] It is true that the Apostles beheld the angels of the Ascension, who "stood by them" as "two men in white apparel;" but we do not know that Nathanael was one of the Twelve—the question turning entirely on his very doubtful identification with Bartholomew. Even if he *did* see those angels, it is manifest that they could not be said, by any stretch of language, to be "ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." As in the only other case in which they were seen as attendant on the Son of Man, their appearing was a sign of his absence, not of his presence; not until He had risen and departed from the tomb did the angel descend and roll away the stone,—did angels come and sit, one at the head, the other at the feet, where He *had* lain; not until He was taken up into heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight, did

[1] It does not appear to me, from St. Matthew xxviii. 4, that the keepers had any vision of the angel. I should suppose they were blinded by the blaze of light and terrified by the convulsion which shook the massive stone out of its place.

angels stand beside the Apostles to tell them of his coming again. I do not doubt that holy angels were constantly near Him, and about Him; and He, with the vision of perfect faith, unclouded by any selfishness or mistrust, may well have seen them, even as He was seen of them (1 Tim. iii. 16): but, manifestly, it was part of the lowliness and, so to speak, ordinariness of his human life that no display of angelic attendance was ever allowed for Him or by Him. The "Son of man" was no more visibly or literally "ascended" or "descended" on of angels than any other child of earth: few and far between were the attestations of his superhuman origin, and they invisible, it may be, save to the eye of the Forerunner (John 1. 32), inaudible save to the ear of the beloved Disciple (John xii. 28, 29). I reject, therefore, with some confidence, the idea that any seeing with bodily eyes is here intended.

III. In seeking a more satisfactory solution we must remember that our Lord was speaking to a devout student of the Holy Writings,—one to whom the words of Moses were at least as familiar as they are to us. And even to us the remarkable phrase—"ascending and descending," used of the "angels of God"—is so familiar that it cannot but recall to our minds the story to which it belongs. There was a child of man long ago who "lighted upon a certain place,"—because, I suppose, he was too tired to go any further,—upon whom, as he slept, the angels of God ascended and descended in a vision of the night. How should Nathanael fail to divine in a moment that it was of Jacob's ladder our Lord spake, intimating that He was the true

Child of Man in whom the vision should be fulfilled; *for* whom heaven should be ever opened; *on* whom and *through* whom the angel intercourse betwixt heaven and earth should be established for evermore?

Supposing that the reference really is to that old vision, we conclude at once that the "seeing" here promised is a spiritual seeing, a seeing of faith, a seeing with those eyes of the soul which are enlightened by the Holy Ghost to behold hidden mysteries: and we have further to inquire what those mysteries are which are fulfilled and realized in Christ, having been signified long before in Jacob and in his vision of the ascending and descending angels.

Now, I do not think that the significance of Jacob's vision can well be missed, at least in its outlines. Jacob, as we know, was a man who had "faith," *i.e.*, he had a considerable mental grasp upon unseen realities, and set a considerable value upon spiritual blessings, such as those attached to the birthright. At the same time, like other able and subtle men, Jacob was one who relied greatly upon his own address and resources to reach his ends and bear him through his difficulties. No doubt, as he lay down on his hard bed that night, his last thought was that now he must depend more than ever upon his own craft and perseverance for any future success. And the vision which God gave him corresponded both to the better and to the worse side of his character: it corresponded to his faith, his mental hold upon the unseen; for this alone gave the vision any meaning for him, any power for good over him: it corresponded also to his characteristic cunning, to his confidence in his own policy; for it revealed to him

a whole sphere of blessed and holy agencies, innumerable, incessant, indestructible, whereby God would work out the same ends which *he* had thought to achieve by his own paltry cleverness: he knew now that the Almighty had *not* left men to reach their ends, and overreach their fellows, as best they might, by any means they could; he knew now that the intercourse between heaven and earth, between God and man, was open, unbroken, continuous, and close. This was, no doubt, the meaning of those angels; no staircase of the greatest king and most attentive to his realm was ever so crowded with the feet of them that came and went upon the business of his kingdom, as was that staircase of the heavenly Monarch with the swift incessant feet of those his angel messengers. Surely it was a lovely vision, fraught with blessed truths; yet it was but a vision, once given, and to one; and he perhaps not fully alive to its meaning.

But in the fulness of time came One on whom the faithful of all ages, gazing, behold the heavens opened and the angel-intercourse of God and man realized and perfected for evermore. For hitherto there had been a bar to the free development of this intercourse; not indeed on God's side, but on man's. God sent his missives and his messengers, but they were not received: the angels brought his blessings and his bounties down, but they waited in vain for the prayers, the praises, the thanksgivings, which they should have carried up again: but few had even so much faith as Jacob: but few made vows as acceptable even as his. So it seemed as though the staircase had been broken down in course of

ages, or had become moss-grown and impassable for want of use.

But in the Son of Man, who, like Jacob, was an exile and a wanderer, not having where to lay his head,—who, like Jacob, had left his Father's home and taken a long journey through desolate places to seek for himself a Bride, even the Church; in this Son of Man, the Head and Flower of the human family, the Second Adam, who summed up in Himself the whole regenerate race of men; *in* Him, and *for* Him, the heavens were always open, and the angels of God were always passing and repassing between the Father and the Incarnate Son.

And still this is not all. For doubtless the angels ascend and descend upon the Son of Man, not as a solitary individual, like Jacob, but, as I have said, as the Head and Representative of all regenerate mankind. They light on Him, as it were, because his humanity is that lofty stainless peak which itself of all earth lies the nearest to heaven, and whence alone all earth may well be reached. On Him they descend with all those gifts and graces and holy influences which the Father giveth to Him immeasurably, and through Him to all his members in measure. From Him they ascend, bearing to the Father every cry of the penitent, every sigh of the sorrowful, every dumb aspiration of the ignorant, every vague yearning of the ill-at-ease; for He is the one Mediator through whom all this mutual interchange must pass of prayer and healing, of asking and giving.

There is another way of regarding this prophecy which is not really different. We may say, and say truly, that the Son of Man lives on still, still a pil-

grim and a stranger, still an exile from home, still nursed in hardship, still tutored by adversity and made perfect through sufferings; still He hath not where to lay his head, and is desolate and exceeding sorrowful. For the Son of Man, ascended in his proper Person, lives on in the persons of his earthly members. By reason of the unearthly but most real unity and *solidarité* between Him and them, his life is theirs and their life is his. We know that the Son of Man still sits by the wayside of life, begging, in the person of the "least of these his brethren:" even so the Son of Man lodges yet in the empty wilderness, an exile and a wanderer, in the persons of his tried and suffering members. But even so the angels of God do ever ascend and descend upon this Son of Man. They ascend upon Him, the risen Head; they descend upon Him in us, the earthly members: we and He are not divided; we "sit in heavenly places" in Him, He wanders through the lonely waste in us; and between is that perpetual intercourse which makes the needs and sorrows of the desert to be felt upon the throne,—which makes the desert to be glorified with the beauties and the graces of heaven.

I venture to think that all this, and much more in the same line of thought, was intended by our Lord's words to Nathanael; and certainly nothing more literal, nothing less far-reaching, can seem at all adequate or satisfactory. In conclusion I ought to say that this interpretation has been pointed at by many, in ancient and in modern times. I have but tried to work it out.

RAYNER WINTERBOTHAM.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER IV. VERSES 1–5.

THERE are many indications that St. Paul distinctly foresaw the deadly influence which Oriental mysticism was likely to exert upon the faith and morals of the Christian Church. The ascetic tendency was without doubt present in the Essenic communities so highly extolled by Josephus, Philo, and Pliny. In Ephesus, the early ministry of Apollos, before he had understood or accepted the Pauline doctrine, had been so successful that he had baptized numerous disciples into the faith of the kingdom of God as it was proclaimed by John the Baptist. A few years later Paul feared that grievous wolves would enter into the flock of God, and that among the elders of the Church at Ephesus would arise those who would teach perverse things. The perversity was not simply a substitution of certain counsels of perfection in place of the Divine life. These proposals to abstain from all gratification of the flesh, and to obtain access to God by ascetic regimen, were based upon speculations about the nature of matter and the inherent evil of the flesh as a physical organization. If the physical universe were the workmanship of a power alien from that of the Supreme Being, then the Christian doctrine of the manifestation of God in the flesh was at stake. The Apostle John, in this city of Ephesus, did subsequently encounter the identical delusion of those who denied the true humanity of the blessed Lord; and in later years numerous sects arose in Asia, Syria, Phrygia, and North Africa, who coupled

fantastic views of the person of Christ, and rash and wild speculations touching the Incarnation, with theories of human life which threatened to break up the kingdom of God, and shatter all loyalty to the Supreme Giver of life.

It is not surprising that the prophetic mind of St. Paul should have anticipated this morbid and perilous delusion, nor that he should have been reminded of it when "the mystery of godliness" filled his thoughts with its own effulgent glory. He proceeds to say: "*The Spirit speaketh expressly*," *i.e.*, the Holy Ghost, who was ruling the Christian Church and directing the career of the Apostles, had given express utterance to a certain prophetic oracle. It will not do, with Heydenreich, to translate "*spiritual men.*" The Apostle does not hesitate to refer the outlook into the future to the source of all prophetic insight—to the Holy Spirit of God. The "express" utterance may, nay, must have come from the lips of living men, but it was nevertheless accepted as a Divine premonition. If it had come to the Church through the special consciousness of Paul, he would probably have written, "I know in the Spirit," or, "the Lord said unto me;" but by using a word which in later Greek[1] is invariably used for definite speech, he implies that the customary method by which the Spirit made known his will had been employed in this instance. *The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in later times or seasons.* The word καιροῖς is used here almost in the sense of χρονοῖς. The essential idea of the latter is a "duration or period of time;" while

[1] Polybius and Strabo use the adverb. The earlier writers use the adjective ῥητός, in the sense of "settled and defined by speech."

the former word (only used in this place in similar construction) denotes "season," "opportunity," "critical moment," and probably suggests that the later times, when what he is about to describe may be expected to take place, will be "hours of crises" charged with great consequences to the Church;—in these crises, *certain persons will depart from the faith.* The phrase is not synonymous with "the last days" preceding the coming of the Lord to judgment, but with moments not far distant, when courage, fidelity, and loyalty to truth would be of infinite service. "The faith" here is "the mystery of godliness, which is confessedly great," and (as in Acts vi. 7; Jude, 3; Rom. i. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 21; 2 Tim. iii. 8) is used here for the great *object* which Christian faith embraces. *Giving heed* (*cf.* Chap. i. 4) *to deceptive spirits.* Paul recognizes here and elsewhere the dominion of the evil one, the supernatural energy and personal source of evil and falsehood. There is one great Spirit of Truth; there are numerous spirits of error and untruth, "rulers of the darkness of the world." Two or three thoughts are suggested: (1) The interference and anarchy effected by this energy are not physical, but spiritual. He refers not to any imperfect work of God in nature, but to "spiritual wickedness in high places." (2) These "spirits" are "*deceiving*," not *coercing*, powers. They can be exposed, detected, resisted, and overcome. Moreover, (3) they do not entangle or vitiate our responsibility, and cannot baffle us unless we "give heed" to them. This becomes more clear when we find that these apostates from the faith will give heed also *to the teachings of dæmons—i.e.*, to the doctrines emanating from

devils. The Apostle is not referring to "doctrines about devils;" for the linguistic usage of the New Testament shews that the genitive is here "of the subject."[1] The genitive clauses which follow are not in grammatical apposition with "the dæmons," as this would imply that the false teachers *were* the dæmons, or that the dæmons were suffering from seared consciences; but several clauses are prepositional adjuncts to the description of those who "give heed to the spirits that deceive and to the teachings of devils." They will act thus *in the hypocrisy of false speakers, who have been branded on their own consciences.* Their hypocrisy consists in falsifying the great facts of nature, in disloyalty and treachery to the Supreme God, while they profess to have attained a higher Christian life. The delicacy of conscience has been branded as with hot iron, seared and made insensitive by the cautery of a burning lie. The language is as strong as words can make it, and blazes with the fire of a holy indignation. We are almost amazed to find that the "devilish" doctrine against which the Apostle protests by anticipation is,—

Verse 3.—*Forbidding to marry, and commanding*[2] *to abstain from meats, which God made* (once for all) *for participation with thanksgiving by the faithful and by those who have attained a full knowledge of the truth.* The Catholic Expositors are explicit in admitting the evil of these suggestions. Augustine[3] draws a distinction between abstaining from marriage as a counsel of perfection and forbidding it as a sin;

1 *Cf.* Col. ii. 22 and Jas. iii. 15, for his description of the wisdom which is not "from above."

2 *Cf.* for this construction 1 Cor. xiv. 34. Κωλυόντων is equivalent to λέγων μὴ; the μὴ is dropped in the second clause.

3 Cont. Faust, xxx. 6.

between abstaining from meats for religious or moral purposes and doing so from the persuasion that they are in themselves evil. "The one," says he, "is the doctrine of Apostles and Prophets, and the other the doctrine of devils." The use which the Romish and ascetic writers have made of a few passages in the New Testament in apparent praise of celibacy runs, however, perilously near to that which is here condemned, by creating imaginary virtues and supererogatory merits. The gloss, often insisted on, that the Roman Church has never condemned marriage as such, does not go to the root of the delusion which was early transferred from Essenic asceticism, from Oriental Dualism, and from Buddhism into the Church of Christ. The supposition that there is any relation more saintly than that between a husband and wife, anything purer than a mother's love, or than the parental and filial relations arising from marriage, is closely blended with the claims of a hierarchy and the pretensions of Rome. In the earliest times it was associated with, and arose out of, ideas of the flesh, which compelled a different reading of "the flesh of Christ" and promoted the speculation that the Logos descended into a phantasmal body which had no real existence. It was this which rendered it imperative that all who would resemble Christ should reduce the body by continual mortification to a phantasmal or unreal state. Josephus shews that the Essenes had gone quite far enough in this direction already to make the prophecy thus quoted by Paul perfectly comprehensible and necessary.[1] Considerable light is thrown upon this ascetic dietary by Philo, "De Vita Contemplativa," c. iv., "The Thera-

[1] B. J. ii. 82 ; Ant. xviii. 1, 5.

peutæ eat nothing of a costly character, but plain bread and a seasoning of salt, which the more luxurious of them do further season with hyssop; and their drink is water from the spring; for they oppose those feelings which nature has made mistresses of the human race, namely, hunger and thirst, giving them nothing to flatter or humour them, but only such things as it is not possible to do without. On this account they eat only so far as not to be hungry, and they drink just enough to escape from thirst, avoiding all satiety as an enemy and plotter against both soul and body."

There was a vast difference in degree between this counsel of perfection and that pursued in hundreds of Buddhistic monasteries, and moreover that which was subsequently followed by the African and Syrian recluses, and by multitudes who submitted to the more stringent ascetic rules, by men and women who have thought to praise God by feasting on stinking fish and inhaling the incense of rancid tallow, by laceration of the flesh and revolting filthiness of person and attire; but the principle, the dualistic root of the evil, is the same in both cases, and the Apostle in these grand words supplies the true antidote to it. Paul did not meet the speculation of Cerinthus, or Saturninus, or Marcion, by anticipative argument, but he maintained a counter-position of immense significance. His position was, that the Creator of the world has purposed the joy of his creatures and would have them take his gifts as a holy eucharist. He implied that those who have received the faith of Christ are alone adequately alive to the beneficence of God.[1]

1 The absence of a second article before ἐπεγνωκόσι shews that this clause, together with πιστοῖς, expresses one idea, and does not justify any reference to some special *gnosis* acquired by a party or clique in the Church.

Verse 4.—Bengel takes the ὅτι ("*that*") as introducing THE TRUTH, which, when deeply appreciated or accepted, will justify the thankful reception of God's gifts. It is better, with Huther and Ellicott, to take the ὅτι as causal, and as providing a confirmation of the preceding sentence, for two reasons: (1) "*The truth*" is, in Biblical usage, not an isolated proposition, or a solitary principle, however great, but the whole complex of the Divine thought, the accurate expression of the reality of things. (2) There are parallelisms in the language of the sentence which now follows with that which has preceded.[1] We take it, then, as follows:—*Because every creation of God is good*, beautiful, or excellent, and because *nothing is to be rejected if it be received with thanksgiving.*

There is a reference here to the root-principle of Hebrew revelation, that "all things are of God," that God pronounced all things to be very good. Deep knowledge of the goodness of God's workmanship and a delight in his supreme and holy will are accompaniments of the highest faith. Here is the resting in and with God which is the true Sabbatism. Coleridge put the idea grandly in his "Religious Musings," for, when portraying the man who has "saturated" his "constant soul" with the truth of the Divine Love, he says,—

> "From himself he flies:
> Stands in the sun, and with no partial gaze
> Views all creation; and he loves it all,
> And blesses it, and calls it very good!
> This is indeed to dwell with the Most High!
> Cherubs and rapture-trembling Seraphim
> Can press no nearer to the Almighty's throne."

[1] The κτίσμα with ἔκτισεν, the repetition of μετὰ εὐχαριστίας and μετάλημψιν with λαμβανόμενον.

St. Paul elsewhere said (Romans xiv. 14) "that nothing is common on its own account" (*per se*), and, verse 20, "that all things are pure to the pure mind." Our Divine Lord "purified all meats"[1] by the grand assertion that "nothing from without entering into a man has the power to defile him." Wettstein, and many Commentators since, here quote the noble line in the "Iliad" of Homer, "the glorious gifts of the gods are not to be rejected by thee." St. Paul, however, inserts an important condition: "*if it* [the κτίσμα] *be received with thanksgiving.*" Thanksgiving sweetens common mercies by recognizing the hand of the Giver. Prayer and supplication are incomplete without thanksgiving. (Phil. iv. 10.) The wings of prayer are praise. Because we have received so much, we trust the infinite fulness of Love. The *eucharistia* of the Apostle is not a mere sense of gratification; it is not the eager or greedy clutching at the possible delights of the flesh or of the mind. Paul speaks of a communion with God, a response to the great Giver, a lifting up of heart to Him who gives. There is a safeguard here from possible abuse of the glorious liberty of the sons of God; while the words which follow make it quite clear that St. Paul justified no license, and would himself turn every meal into a eucharist, into a Divine service. *For* (says he) *it is made holy* (not declared to be pure and holy) *by the Word of God, and* intercession or *prayer.* The verb ἁγιάζεται is not merely declarative, but causative.

[1] That is, if we are to take the critical reading, καθαρίζων, in St. Mark vii. 19. *Cf.* Tischendorf, Lachmann, and Tregelles. Origen made this use of the passage as it stands in St. Mark's Gospel.

It describes an action which is productive of a holy thing. The common food of earth is not defiling nor cursed in the hands or lips of one who consciously receives it from the Holy God, and does so with *the word of God and prayer.* Some have supposed that the "Word of God" is the talismanic utterance of the sanctifying name of God, and others that it is the revealed distinction of the clean and unclean meats,—a position which would be strangely discordant with Paul's whole doctrine of food. I prefer to take here the "Word of God" as the revelation of God in the Scriptures, which warrants our reception of the Divine gifts, which is often peculiarly adapted to be the medium of expressing to God our thanksgiving and prayer for his mercies. That Word of God gives life-sustaining power to the creatures of his hands. Man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word proceeding from the mouth of God. The religious acts which Christian people customarily perform over their food need fresh consideration. Some mumble a talismanic charm without meaning or reverence; others take the opportunity for uttering lengthened prayer for spiritual blessings. It would be well to study how best to give to our daily bread a sanctifying meaning and sacramental value, how we can most sincerely and consciously receive gifts from God, and consecrate them by telling Him our gratitude. Charles Lamb asked why we should say "grace before meat," and not "grace before Milton." Why, indeed? Yet why should we ever lose so good an opportunity of realizing our dependence and sanctifying the "creatures of God"?

The "Apostolic Constitutions" (vii. 49) preserve an early Christian grace, which is not without interest: "Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hast nourished me from my youth, who givest food to all flesh. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, that we, always having all sufficiency, may abound unto every good work, in Christ Jesus our Lord, through Whom to Thee be glory, honour, and power for ever. Amen."

Here is another, which Chrysostom tells us was used in certain religious fraternities:—

"Glory be to Thee, O Lord, O Holy One; Glory be to Thee, O King, for Thou hast given to us food for our gladness. Fill us with the Holy Spirit, that we may be found well pleasing in thy sight, and not ashamed when Thou shalt render to every man according to his work." H. R. REYNOLDS.

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTER II.

Having thus described the state of the Heathen world, St. Paul proceeds to draw an inference from what he has said on the subject. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O Man!" To most ordinary readers this inference appears very strange; and it does indeed involve a serious difficulty, which few of the Commentators have shewn themselves able fully to appreciate. It is not till Verse 17 of this Chapter that St. Paul expressly declares whom he has been addressing in the words "O Man!" We see, however, that it must be one who represents either the Heathen society, of which he has been just speaking, or the Jews. But as it is certain that the Heathen society

did not in any proper sense sit in judgment on itself, it can be only the Jew who is here addressed. If the Apostle had put his argument in a logical form, it would have run something like this: A man is inexcusable who sits in judgment on offences which he himself commits. But the Jew does sit in judgment on the offences of the Heathen world, of which he himself partakes; and, therefore, is inexcusable and self-condemned. That is perfectly correct in form, but it takes for granted the proposition that the Jews were guilty of the same offences as the Heathen whom they condemned. St. Paul, however, can hardly have meant to impute to the Jews a corruption like that which prevailed among the Heathen. We are sure that whatever cases of this kind may have existed must have formed very rare exceptions to the general rule; and that ordinary Jews were as blameless in their outward conduct, and lived as decent respectable lives as St. Paul himself before his conversion.

The Pharisees, who incurred the severest rebukes from our Lord and before Him from John the Baptist, though, when considered in themselves, a large class, were but a small one when compared with the great bulk of the Jewish people. This would follow from the fact that they filled the highest places in society, and were looked up to with reverence as teachers, exemplars, and guides. Moreover their characteristic sin was not any form of gross and scandalous immorality, but of hypocrisy. They pretended to a super-eminent degree of sanctity and strictness, which they used as a cloak to cover their greediness and ambition, "Devouring widows' houses, and, for a pretence, making long prayers."

The sin of the people at large was one rather of omission than of commission. Absorbed in an empty formality, they neglected the two great commandments of the Law,—Love to God and to their neighbour. This, however, is not that with which they are charged by St. Paul; and the offences to which he refers in the 22nd and following verses of Chapter i. must be considered only as illustrations of his general statement as to that which made their condemnation of the Heathen inexcusable. At verse 22 the Apostle says of the Heathen that, *professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.* This has appeared to some to relate to the Heathen philosophy, and has suggested the question, whether St. Paul was acquainted with it; and if so, what view he took of it. The quotations which he gives from Greek poetry in his speech at the Areopagus, and in the Epistle to Titus and the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Chap. xv. 33 (which is probably not taken from any poet, but from a familiar proverb), would not be sufficient ground for an inference as to the extent of his acquaintance with Greek literature; and the education he had received at Tarsus, and at the feet of Gamaliel, does not seem likely to have cultivated a taste for its beauty.

As to the subject-matter,—he could have taken very little interest in the speculations of the Alexandrian philosophy, which he would consider as vain and presumptuous; or in the controversies of the Stoics and Epicureans whom he encountered at Athens, or of the Peripatetics and of the New Academy, which he would have looked upon as little better than empty trifling. If he had been acquainted with the

writings of Plato, one is loth to believe that he would not have been favourably impressed by the numerous approximations to Christian doctrine which he would have found there. But, still, he would have measured their value by the effect they produced on the hearts and lives of men ; and finding that, for this purpose, they were almost totally inefficient, and did not even aim at such a result as to the great mass of mankind, it would seem that he must have regarded them as almost utterly worthless. The question, however, arising from Verse 22 is, as to the Apostle's meaning in the words, "*professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;*" and we are led to ask what is the *wisdom* and what the *folly* which he is speaking of. It appears from the context that the wisdom was that by which, neglecting the witness which God had given of Himself in the works of Creation, they were led astray into idolatry, and indulged their *vain imaginations* in the invention of their fabulous mythology. This, however, it must be observed, was not the work of the philosophers, who, on the contrary, were always sceptical and hostile to it, but partly of the poets, as to whom Herodotus observes, that Homer and Hesiod were the founders of Greek religion, and partly of the people itself, which was continually moulding the traditions they received into new shapes.

The *wisdom* (σοφία) which they are said to have professed seems to refer, not to philosophy, but to that excellence in science and art in which they were undoubtedly without a rival in the ancient world. Their *folly* consisted in their making this wisdom subservient to a vain creed and to a superstitious worship.

VERSE 2.—*We are sure that the judgment of God is according unto truth against them which commit such things.* But it would not be *according unto truth* if they who commit such things were to escape with impunity.

VERSE 3.—Strong emphasis is to be laid on the word *thou*,—"that *thou* shalt escape the judgment of God," while others, not more guilty, are punished.

VERSE 4.—*Or despisest thou?* is as much as to say, art thou not shewing that thou despisest the riches? &c.

VERSE 5.—The word translated *against*, is properly *in*, the day of wrath. But the Apostle had in view the completion of the *treasure of wrath*, which would not take place before the day of wrath, or the last judgment.

VERSE 6.—*Who will render to every man according to his deeds.* Some have found it difficult to reconcile this language with what the Apostle elsewhere says as to justifying faith; but there is no real contradiction between the Apostle's silence and his express teaching on this subject. He traces the orbit in which all who are to attain to eternal life must be found moving: but he says nothing here as to the nature of the force by which they are to be kept in that orbit.

VERSE 8.—The word rendered *contentious* (ἐξ ἐριθείας) is totally mistranslated, on the supposition that it has something to do with the word ἔρις, strife, with which it is wholly unconnected. It comes from ἐριθος, a day-labourer, a hireling, one who labours for hire: and it is applied by Homer to mowers and reapers who work for hire. The word ἐριθεία is used of those who canvass for office, and form parties and cabals to accomplish their ends. Hence, in the largest sense, it will signify those who labour for their own private and selfish ends; and it is remarkable that

this should be contrasted with the patient continuance in well doing, as containing in itself every kind of evil. The words rendered *unto them that are contentious*, would be more properly translated *to them who are of a mercenary spirit.*

VERSE 11.—The words, *there is no respect of persons with God*, complete the exposure of the presumption which led the Jews to imagine that they should escape the judgment of God under cover of their religious privileges.

Here, however, a question may arise whether this statement is consistent with the priority assigned to the Jews by the words, "*the Jew first, and also the Gentile.*" But, in the first place, it seems clear that the priority cannot relate to the order of time, since it is to be declared at the final judgment; and then it can only refer to the nature and amount of the reward or punishment to be received by Jew and Gentile. We could easily understand that it would be required by the Divine justice that the disobedient Jew should incur a heavier punishment than the reckless Gentile, who had not neglected or abused the like privileges. But it would seem as if, on the same principle, the Gentile who had lived up to the light vouchsafed to him should receive a higher reward than the Jew; whereas it appears that the obedient Jew is still to have some advantage over him in this respect, and is to stand higher in the Divine favour. This is, however, not a greater difficulty than is involved in the original election of a people appointed to be the depository of a special Divine Revelation; and the privileges with which the Jews were favoured were designed for the general benefit of mankind.

VERSE 12.—*As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law.* As many as have sinned without the knowledge of the (Mosaic) law shall perish, but not because they will be tried by that law or according to its rule. And as many as have sinned in the law, or while subject to the law, shall be judged by the law; and the reason given for this in Verse 13 is, that at the final judgment the question will not be as to the hearing, but as to the doing, of the law. The hearing of the law is here mentioned, because it was generally known, not through reading, but through the hearing of it when read in the synagogues.

Here in our Version begins a parenthesis, which is made to include Verses 14, 15. Some have begun this parenthesis as far back as Verse 5. The better course seems to confine it to Verses 14, 15, so that Verse 16 should describe the time at which the doers of the law shall be justified, to the exclusion of those who are hearers of it only, as the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ according to the Gospel preached by St. Paul.

VERSE 14.—*Do by nature:* that is, without the aid of any such Revelation as was made to the Jews, and only in obedience to the dictates of their conscience, which stood to them in the stead of the Mosaic law, so that they might be said to be a law unto themselves.

VERSE 15. — *Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts:* that is, inasmuch as they shew that the work of the law, the course of conduct

prescribed by the law, is written in their hearts; the evidence of this fact, given by their actions, being confirmed by the inward witness of their conscience and also by the judgments which they pronounced in accusation or excuse of one another.

VERSE 17.—*Thou restest in the law:* thou placest thy reliance on the law as thy distinguishing privilege, *and makest thy boast of God*, pridest thyself upon God, as enjoying his special favour in the knowledge of his will and the discernment of things *that are more excellent* in which thou hast been *instructed out of the law.*

VERSE 20.—*Which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.* It is a total misconception of the Apostle's argument to suppose that the *form* is contrasted with the *substance* and *reality*, as in the Second Epistle to Timothy (Chap. iii. 5). Some are said *to have a form of godliness, but to deny the power thereof.* Here "form" is used in an entirely different sense. The form of a thing is that by means of which it is perceived, either by the senses or by the mind. As the impression made by a seal, or an image reflected by a glass, so the form of knowledge and of the truth contained in the law is that distinct exhibition of knowledge and of the truth which the law presents. The Jew is said to have the form as something outside of himself and embodied in the law.

VERSE 24.—The passage referred to appears to be taken from Isaiah (Chap. lii. 5): *My name continually, every day, is blasphemed.* The Gentiles judge of God by the the character of his worshippers.

VERSE 25.—The outward sign without the thing signified is worse than worthless; but the thing sig-

nified retains all its value, though separate from the outward sign, when the separation is the effect, not of human self-will, but of a Divine appointment.

VERSE 26.—*Shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?* that is, be accepted as equivalent to it.

VERSE 27.—*And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law:* that is, Shall not the uncircumcision, which fulfils the law without any other aid than that which is granted to all mankind, judge thee?——*Judge thee,* by putting thee to shame for the abuse of thy peculiar privileges.——*Who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law:* that is, notwithstanding that thou hast the privilege of a written law and a visible ordinance. The preposition in, *διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς,* signifies, according to the usage of classical Greek writers, the state of things or circumstances in or under which anything is done, as in the case of a march accompanied by music.

VERSE 28.—*For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly.* To Jewish readers this assertion, which to Christians, in the light of the Sermon on the Mount sounds self-evident and almost commonplace, must have appeared to be the wildest of paradoxes. For what is a Jew which is one outwardly? He is one who is seen to be living in the observance of all the precepts of the Levitical law, such as the sabbatical rest, the festivals and fasts, the abstinence from certain kinds of food, the ablution of persons and things, and the like, by which he was conspicuously distinguished from all around him. And these were the things on which he set the highest value, both as his clearest title to the Divine favour and as raising him above the rest of mankind. Whereas St. Paul here

teaches that they did not give him the right to the name of a Jew at all, and that this right must depend on something entirely different: that is, a certain disposition of the heart and state of the conscience which was beyond the reach of any human eye; and that the true circumcision is not that which is visible in the flesh and enjoined by the law, but that which is effected in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The last words of the Chapter should be, not "*whose praise is not of men, but of God;*" but, "the praise of which is not of men, but of God;" the praise, that is of which thing, referring to all that has gone before, consists not in the applause of men but in the approbation of God. With this we may compare the words of Revelation ii. 9, "*I know the blasphemy of them which say that they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan,*" &c.

St. Paul's main object in Chapter ii. has been to shew that, notwithstanding the licentiousness and depravity which prevailed in the Heathen world, it afforded the Jews no just ground for boasting or self-complacency, when they compared their own moral condition with that of the Gentiles, inasmuch as all that distinguished them from other men was an outward show of religion, which was utterly worthless when unaccompanied by a corresponding inward disposition, which alone could render it acceptable to God, who is *a searcher of hearts*, and *no respecter of persons*. He now proceeds to guard himself against misapprehensions and to meet various objections which might be raised by Jewish adversaries.

CONNOP THIRLWALL.

THE EXPOSITOR.

THE IDENTITY OF THE LORD JESUS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.

After his resurrection the Lord Jesus took pains to satisfy his friends of his corporeal identity. The fact which it was important to establish by "infallible proofs" was not simply that He had re-assumed a body which was no phantasm, but possessed of material properties and organs. It was also this, that the body in which He re-appeared was the very same which had suffered on the cross and lain in the sepulchre. In many ways, indeed, his resurrection body differed widely from the body of his humiliation and passion. It was not ordinarily dependent on the same sustenance. It did not always travel to and fro by the same method of locomotion. It came and went, appeared and dissappeared, in a way which baffled explanation. Sometimes it seems not to have been recognizable even by those who had previously known Him well. There was much to tell of change wrought by death, or after death by resurrection, upon the familiar body which the Virgin bore, which had toiled and rested, by day and night, like that of other men, which rough hands had stripped and cruel blows had torn, which some

of his friends had so lately swathed with bands of perfumed linen. Plainly, He had done more than come to life again. He had entered a different sphere of existence. Out of the company of mortal men He had passed into some higher state, where the physical conditions were altered and the body's powers enlarged; where its materials had become less gross and its wants less incessant, or, perchance, less mean. Yet, however considerable might be these changes produced upon the constitution of the Saviour's body, it was not a new body which He now inhabited, but the same one as before. The change had not destroyed identity. Physically He was the very same man He ever was. His scars proved it. He shewed the disciples his hands and feet, and bade them observe that they carried recognizable marks. "Behold them," He cried, "that they are my own hands, my own feet." They touched the stigmata; they searched his side; they knew Him by his wounds.

There is something, however, of still graver moment than corporeal identity: I mean the continuous or unaltered identity of our risen Lord in all mental and moral characteristics. So long as He dwelt among us here, men like ourselves knew Him for a friend. They were familiar with his habits of thought, his turns of speech, his mien and gesture, his principles of conduct. They could trace in all He did his own stamp, and say of each utterance or action that it was like the Man. This mental and moral physiognomy of Jesus was in fact so sharply lined, as well as consistent and of one piece, that even the records we possess of Him do not fail to preserve a quite unique and distinctive individuality. From the Four Gospels

the world has always felt sure that it knew this Man. No one could palm off on us a fifth gospel. Hardly a single sentence could be put into his mouth, or an anecdote about Him invented, without the literary public being able to decide whether or not it were like the Jesus of our Bible. If our scanty documents reproduce a character so original as to be inimitable, let the reader conceive how that lovely life must have burned its image into the souls of men and women who lived with Him, travelled with Him, watched Him, studied Him, month after month, with hearts that loved and eyes that adored Him! Now this Man was dead. What change is wrought by death on the bodily frame we know, and we shudder to know it; but what change it may work on the higher part of a man, on the thoughts, affections, habits, tastes, loves, or hates, of our vanished friend, who can tell? Much of the pathos of death lies just here, that it is our friend's farewell to everything which was wont to give shape or colour to his existence. He has left all familiar things behind him, to pass into a state obscure and undiscovered—a state so withdrawn from our investigation that we have no data for even guessing what he will be like, or how he will find himself there, or through what alterations he may pass under the pressure of new conditions. If only we knew a little of that other life! But how far can we count on our dear one remaining the same whom we loved on earth—the same in himself or as dear to us—when now there is no more any earthly life for him, nor any light of the sun, nor voice of friends, nor aught left unchanged within all the circle in which, somewhere out of sight, he moves and has his novel unimagined being?

The Christian teaching that believers are at death made perfect in holiness is only credible on the assumption that death does profoundly modify character. It presupposes that the conditions into which the dead are brought will powerfully re-act to depress one side of character and strengthen another, to modify the current of thought and give ampler scope to desires which in this life find no sufficient satisfaction. In the case of Jesus, it is true, there was no imperfect, to be exchanged for a perfect, holiness. The atmosphere which even on earth He had always breathed had been like an air of heaven. For Him to leave this world was to go home. He said it was a return to the Father whence He came. Yet in such a return from the human world, where men knew and could observe Him, to that celestial state of glory, might there not lie a change which would prove fatal to all the friendships they had formed with Him below? Unless He carry back into the world of the Immortals the same moral character we have learnt to admire and prize on earth, and retain after death the same close warm tie of relationship to his sinful brothers; unless, in short, death does nothing to sunder the confidence and familiarity which were engendered by years of earthly converse, of what use will it be that we have gone in and out with the Son of God and He has called us "friends"? Jesus of Nazareth we know; Him we can confide in: but who will tell us that Jesus is to be the same to us after death has snapped the bonds of flesh and resurrection has restored Him to the society of the glorified and deathless?

If there were time for such misgivings as these to arise in the hearts of the disciples, the first hour of resumed intercourse with Him who had been dead must have sufficed to dissipate them. They had more tests for judging of his identity than we have; and tests, too, which were both more sensitive and more trustworthy. A friend returns to us after many years of tropical exposure have bronzed and oldened his features, or after some terrible accident or fiery sickness has effaced the old familiar look from his countenance. What do we first recognize him by? By this, that he retains his former opinions or exhibits similar traits of disposition? No; that comes out only after prolonged intercourse with him. It is rather by some indescribable trick of voice or manner, some trifling unconscious gesture. These little traits would tell nothing to a stranger, but they instantly make us sure of our friend. Now, it is certain that the disciples knew their risen Master first by signs like these. Mary recognized Him by the tone in which He pronounced her own name. John detected the methodical hand of his Friend in the arrangement of the napkin in the sepulchre. The Two at Emmaus perhaps had their eyes opened by his way of dividing the loaf at their frugal supper. Judged even by minute tests like these, the Man was in no wise altered. Such personal characteristics, however, are of no use to any subsequent generation. What *we* have to study is only what He is reported to have said and done after his resurrection. Can we trace there the same mental habits, a mind that works along the same line, a moral nature wearing the identical character, a

heart beating with just such emotions as the unslain untransfigured Man whom Pilate sent to the cross?

Each reader will answer this question best after studying it for himself, since the impression produced by such evidence of personal identity is one which can scarcely be conveyed by one student to another. It needs to be received from immediate contact with the historical data. I can only indicate how some of these data appear to me to bear upon the question.

Almost the earliest words of our Lord after He rose[1] were those which He spoke to Mary Magdalene at the door of the tomb (John xx. 17). They betray, in combination, two of the most characteristic features in the previous character of Jesus. They imply a certain peculiar sense of brotherhood with other men, not as a thing to be taken for granted, but as something to which attention needs to be called; and along with this they reveal a profound consciousness of a peculiar relationship to God, such as set Him apart from other men. Both these elements are admitted to form striking peculiarities in the Jesus of the Gospels, especially of the Fourth Gospel. I think they are nowhere present more characteristically than in these solemn words of the newly-risen One: "Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say unto them, 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.'"

[1] The precise order of the incidents on the resurrection morning is difficult to fix. Our Lord's meeting with the other women (Matt. xxviii. 10) may have preceded his appearance to Mary of Magdala, notwithstanding the early tradition preserved in the doubtful text—Mark xvi. 9.

A few hours later followed our Lord's walk to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 13–35). In his conversation with Cleopas and his companion we find no decay in the full and ready memory, charged from boyhood with texts of the Old Testament and prompt throughout his public teaching to suggest them. Nor is there the least change in his exposition of Messianic prophecy. During his previous lifetime Jesus had taught that the ancient predictions indicated a suffering Messiah, who should enter into glory only after passion.[1] This interpretation He now repeated (verse 26), apparently with ampler illustrations than before, and once more He is reported to have pressed it upon a larger company of disciples later on the same evening (Luke xxiv. 43-46). The very form of rebuke with which He opened his address to the two travellers: "O fools and slow of heart," recalls similar expressions which recur so frequently in his life that they may be called characteristic.[2] The general impression which I gather, is that the old themes of conversation betwixt Jesus and his followers were quietly resumed after He rose, just as if no chasm of death had been interposed. It is as though the path which led Him to the edge of that gulf had simply been continued on the other side, at the same level, and with the same associates. He began again just where He had left off to die.

One interesting instance of this is found in the assignation for a meeting in Galilee. That had

[1] Compare the following passages from Luke's Gospel alone: ix. 22; xviii. 31; xx. 17; xxii. 22, 37.

[2] Compare, *e.g.*, Matt. xv. 16 (Mark vii. 18); Matt. xxiii. 17, 19; Luke xi. 40; xii. 20.

been expressly arranged a few hours before his betrayal: "After I am risen," said He, "I will go before you into Galilee" (Matt. xxvi. 32; Mark xiv. 28). How natural that one of the first messages sent to the Eleven on the resurrection morning should be, "Go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me" (Matt. xxviii. 10). It is true that the stupor and incredulity into which most of his adherents had fallen made it necessary for Him to grant more than one interview for their satisfaction before they left Jerusalem to meet Him at the original rendezvous on a Galilean hill. But for his own part the returned Master simply assumes that the arrangement holds which He had made with them before He went away.

Other examples of former topics resumed or referred to will occur to careful readers. On the Thursday evening He had promised them a new advent of the Holy Spirit as one comfortable consequence of his decease.[1] On the Sunday evening He repeated that promise in symbol, and began to fulfil it by breathing on them, saying: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). Originally He had conferred upon the Eleven, far away in Galilee, some six months before, a faculty to declare in his name forgiveness of sins. In very similar words He now renews that characteristic and unexampled commission.[2] He repeated by the Lake one of the most significant of his early miracles—the draught of fishes—under circumstances which lent it a parallel significance;[3] and what touched the weary Seven most in

[1] See John xiv. 16, 17, 25, 26; especially xvi. 7 *ff.*

[2] Compare Matt. xviii. 18 with John xx. 23.

[3] Compare Luke v. 1–11 with John xxi.

the morning meal upon the beach (John xxi. 9) was surely this, that He was acting the part of purveyor or householder, where often before He had shared with them a boatman's early breakfast of roasted fish and barley cakes. In the restoration to office of his first apostle, which immediately followed (John xxi. 15–19), no one has ever missed the pointed allusion to Peter's three-fold denial; but neither can we fail to catch in the words, "Follow thou me" (verse 22), a more distant echo of the first call with which, years before, He had on that same shore summoned Simon from his nets. (See Matt. iv. 19.)

Besides such distinct references after resurrection to incidents which occurred previous to his death, there is a distinct variety of evidence, not less valuable though less easily explained, which merits the most careful study. I refer to the moral resemblance in the treatment of his several followers by our Lord before and after the great change. We find Him, in the narratives we possess, coming into close spiritual relations with at least three strongly-marked individualities, besides his treatment of groups of disciples together. He has to handle the womanly love of Mary of Magdala, the matter-of-fact incredulity of Thomas, and the shame of the disgraced boaster, Peter. Let any one sufficiently at home in the manner of Jesus, as it may be gathered from his dealings with men in the earlier sections of the Gospels, weigh candidly these three interviews after He rose again, and say whether they are not in perfect keeping. Is it credible that after the moment of Jesus' death, when next the curtain rises, we have a different Person before us? Is it not the same

skilful and tender hand which is at work carrying on the education of these disciples as if no change had passed upon Him? To my own mind this is the subtlest and therefore the surest evidence of all. It is plain to me that I touch the very same heart as formerly. Death and re-entrance into life have wrought no alteration in the most personal attributes of this well-known Man. He is the same to his friends as ever. He stoops to their feeble faith with equal gentleness. He rebukes with the old tender gravity. He mingles faithfulness and considerate love in the old way. Changed as He is into incorruptible life, with heaven's crown hovering already over his brows, and eyes that are soon to burn like suns; lending only fitful and ghost-like visits to the homes of men ere He takes his flight for the radiant home of the Eternal; what word does He speak, or what act do, in which we cannot recognize the heart of our own earthly Jesus, so as to whisper with delighted awe like John's: "It is the Lord"? (John xxi. 7.)

Such proofs that the personality of Jesus survived unaltered the shock of death and the more mysterious transformation which we call his resurrection, are no less precious to us than to the first disciples. For one thing, the other world, the great dim realm of Hades, is not now, as it used to be, *all* obscure and shadowy. Enough there still is to make our heart sit silent and awe-struck when we see our dear ones go away from beside our warm firesides to a region unvisited, whence no human speech returns to tell us how they fare, and whether they retain in that Place Beyond any knowledge of this

Hither-world, any pensive recollection of the hours which they and we spent together, or any natural yearnings after us, such as we cherish after them. It *is* a sad and a silencing thing to see dear ones die! Only here is one illumined spot amid all that uncertainty and gloom. One figure, at least, is no pale spectre, no hovering disembodied phantom of a friend, flitting before the mocked eye without intelligible voice for the ear to catch. Here is a Man—the Man of all others most human and most real—a Man who was dead like our dead once, but is alive again for evermore, and is not less distinct to our eye, nor less warm to our hand, nor less homely and brotherly to our heart, than before death touched his brow and set on it an aureole of immortality. When we think of that After-world of the dead, we think of Him as its centre and its King. When we bid our departed farewell, we only yield them up into the nearer presence of One whom they know and we know. When we ourselves come to face this awful going hence, we shall not peer into the shadows of a sunless Hades, nor fear to lose ourselves among the flitting ghosts of the countless dead. We shall fix a steady gaze upon one firmly-traced Form, most human and familiar, and say, like Paul, We go to be with Christ. Surely that is a needless fear which always haunts the timid heart as to what shall be found on the other side. Here was at least one Man who went through the river, as we have to do, and reached its further strand; yet when He came back to speak to us, He was as human and as much our own as ever. The stream of death had proved no Lethe to Him, washing out earthly memories in a doleful

forgetfulness. Why, then, should death change our friends so that we shall not know them, or make them more strange to us than they were before? It is not such a very dreadful thing, this dying; for Jesus died. It cannot work any ghastly alteration upon human hearts, or blot out human recollections, or rend the delicate threads of love: Jesus was not thus altered. The unseen world cannot be so remote, uncertain, chill, or strange as we deemed it was. It is just a world of whose population our own risen Jesus forms the type, and of whose habitations He holds the key: "I go to prepare a place for you."

Nor is it only in the world of the dead that we now find a clear spot of certain knowledge. All our spiritual conceptions, and especially our thoughts about God Himself, have been made more sharp, and definite, and homely. The world with which religion has to do is still, no doubt, a world unseen; but it can no longer be termed a world unknown. Peopled as it is with superhuman forces which man cannot guide, and intelligences whose acquaintance he cannot make, that celestial angel-haunted land—resplendent home of God—holds at least one heart on whose beats may be laid the touch of a human finger. The vision of the Seer in Patmos was a vision, it is true; but the fact at the root of it is beyond question. Wherever God's throne may be set, or whatever ministers, radiant and crowned, may encircle it, or however unspeakable by us may be the songs in which the beatified extol his praise; at least there must be, somewhere at the centre of all that inaccessible court, that temple untrodden

by mortal foot, one Man whom the eyes of men have beheld and the hands of men have handled. Down upon his bosom a human head can still be laid to rest. Up into his pure sweet eyes a man can look with trustful gaze. Of the angels we know next to nothing. The Father is very pitiful, but Him hath no man seen at any time. Faith gropes about among "heavenly places" till it can touch a hand that bears a nail-mark in its palm, and having touched that hand, it grasps it and is still.

Nor need any one be afraid to trust the Godhead, since at the heart of it there dwells, unchanged, Jesus of Nazareth. So long as He walked on the earth, it is certain, there was something about Him which wonderfully drew men's affection. Not the good only, nor the rich and great, came about Him or monopolized his care: but just as much the very sad, and the very poor, and the very sinful; broken-hearted fallen women and pure-minded little children, and anxious mothers and amiable youths; weeping funeral guests and pale faces of the long sick; frank gallant soldiers and hardy fishermen; with grey-bearded senators and bandits of wild life. This Man's fascination drew all sorts of people and won the confidence of all. Surely it is something to know that this kindliest and most trustworthy of the sons of men, who while He lived on earth made it beautiful by the acts of sweet ministry He did in it, has taken up to the throne and heart of God the same unchanged nature, home of all lowly charities and patient kindness. Is God, then, a blank to us any longer? a blind force? a postulate of the reason? a something, we know not what? God forbid! Never

have men seen or imagined a character which it would have been better worth their while to detain on earth, if they could, age after age, to be a fountain of health for our worn humanity. *It is certain that this very Man lives on, unchanged, in God.* To Him, therefore, will we still pray. Not now from the pebbles of an earthly beach through the scant light of dawn does his figure loom or his voice reach us where we toil disheartened like the Seven. But when we faint at our long task and look up like them, or when we kneel heart-broken for sin, or when we lie crushed and weeping in utter loneliness, how often does there come floating down across the wide spaces, and past the close array of the pure and blessed, the same familiar Voice that used to speak on earth,—"Fear not: it is I. Thy sins are forgiven thee. Let not your heart be troubled." And our heart whispers back again, "It is the Lord!"

J. OSWALD DYKES.

THE STRENGTH OF WEAKNESS.

2 CORINTHIANS XII. 9.

WHAT St. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was, or, rather, what his "*stake* in the flesh" was,—for so the word ought to be translated,—it is still impossible to determine. The Fathers of the early Church concluded it to be some bodily ailment, as, for instance, "a severe headache." Some of the later Fathers supposed it to be the opposition he encountered from the enemies of the faith, such an opposition as they themselves had constantly to brave. The monks of the Middle

Ages pronounced it to have been that sting of sensual desire by which they were tormented in their solitary cells. Luther thought it was the spiritual conflict, the conflict with the great enemy of souls, which he himself had to wage. And now, again, the Commentators are, as a rule, reverting to the original theory,—that of some severe and disabling physical malady.

No other theory seems to meet the requirements of the case. For St. Paul's infirmity was "an infirmity *in the flesh.*" It must have caused him the most severe and excruciating pain, or he would not have represented himself as writhing under it in an agony comparable with that of a hapless wretch impaled on a stake. It must have impeded him in his work, or threatened to impede him, by exciting disgust in those who saw and heard him, for he thanks his disciples in Galatia for not despising and loathing him for it, for not turning away from him and his message, but, contrariwise, receiving him as though he had been an angel of God. In short, from what he himself tells us of it, it could not have been any inward or spiritual trial; it must have been an excruciating pain, a pain he could not master and conceal, a pain which he loathed lest it should make him loathsome to others, a pain which hindered him in his work and threatened to disable him for it; and, moreover, a pain closely connected with, if not arising from, the abundance of his visions and labours.

These being the chief conditions to be met, it is impossible to assent to the hypothesis, else so

reasonable and welcome, that the malady to which he refers as "a stake in the flesh" was physical blindness; for that could hardly have kept him in a torture so keen and excruciating as the phrase implies: it is much more likely to have been, as the best modern Commentators incline to believe that it was, some pronounced and malignant form of nervous disease. No man could have lived his life of perilous adventure and impassioned service, no man could have had his heart in such a tumult of excited, and often conflicting, emotions, no man could have passed through ecstasies like his,—seeing visions which rapt him into the third heavens and rendered it impossible for him to tell whether he was in the body or out of the body, without making dangerous and exhausting demands on his nervous and branular energy. The nervous trouble may have shewn itself in various ways, at different times,—as, indeed, it is apt to do,—in racking pains, in melancholia, in paralysis or partial paralysis of the organs of speech, by enervating the muscles, by simulating various forms of organic disease, by perilously depressing the vital force, or even in frightful epileptic or cataleptic seizures. When he rose into his most earnest and impassioned utterances, when his spirit was most moved within him and his whole frame glowed with excitement, he may have been suddenly unable to articulate his words, or he may have fallen to the ground with foaming lips and writhing limbs, like a man smitten of God and afflicted. His liability to such seizures, and his dread of the horror and perplexity and disgust they could not fail to excite in those

who witnessed them, may well have constituted the burden which he felt himself unable to bear.

But whatever his malady was, and whatever terrible or loathsome forms it took, to his sensitive mind it was as a stake in the flesh. He felt that he had "the sentence of death in himself," so that he often "despaired of life." And, worse still, he could never be sure that his "infirmity" would not shew itself while he was urging men to be reconciled unto God, and so impede him in the work to which he had devoted his life. Hence he thrice solemnly besought "the Lord," *i.e.*, the Lord Jesus Christ, that this infirmity in the flesh, which was also, at least, in his eyes, a spiritual impediment, might depart from him. And thrice his prayer was at once refused and granted. Instead of delivering him from his agony, the Lord Jesus replied, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for strength is perfected in weakness." This was a new light to the afflicted Apostle. He had conceived of his infirmity as a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him; Christ teaches him that it is an angel of God sent to minister to him. He had conceived of it as an indisputable and well-nigh fatal hindrance; Christ teaches him that it is an indisputable and effectual assistance to him in his work; that the strength which shines through weakness is the more conspicuous and the more impressive for the weakness through which it shines. But no sooner is St. Paul convinced that this *is* the meaning and purpose of his affliction than he begins to glory even in infirmity. He accepts, welcomes, rejoices in the very burden which but now seemed utterly intolerable to him.

From the Greek of this passage it is quite obvious that the words, "*strength is perfected in weakness*,"—there is no "my" in the Original,—are an axiom, or proverb, and that they are intended to convey a law of the spiritual life. They are intended to teach us that, at least in the spiritual province, and for all men as well as for St. Paul, there is a certain finishing and perfecting power in weakness. Not that we are to cherish our infirmities, to remain children when we ought to be men, to continue weak when we may be strong. To be weak is to be miserable. It is not weakness which our Lord commends, but strength struggling against and striving through weakness. Weakness of itself will perfect nothing. But when strength and weakness are combined in the same nature, the weakness may prove a fine discipline for the strength; it may induce watchfulness, prayer, a humble dependence on God, a tender consideration for the weaknesses of our fellows. Perfect strength is apt to be very far from perfect. It is apt to be rude, self-sufficient, untender. But a strength which has to contend with weakness, to pierce through hindrances, to shew itself through reluctant and imperfect organs, is likely to become a gracious and a friendly strength. If it is good to have a giant's strength but not to use it like a giant, then there is no discipline for strength like that of weakness.

In many ways we may see how weakness helps strength, and even becomes a kind of strength. What is it that makes every man ready to defend a woman or a child? Is it not their very weakness mutely appealing for help? Their weakness is in

some sort their strength, then; and they are safe where a man, able to defend himself, might be in danger.

What is it that makes Peter even dearer to us than John, and David than Daniel, and Jacob at least less insipid than Isaac? Is it not because in the former we see weaknesses such as we are conscious of in ourselves, and yet a divine strength striving through their weaknesses and transforming them into its own image? Jacob and David and Peter have a stronger hold upon us than if they had never sinned—not *because* of their sins, however, but because of their passionate repentance and renunciation of their sins; because, in them, we see strength slowly perfecting itself through weakness.

So, too, with St. Paul himself. He, if any man ever had, had the heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel; but the excellency of the treasure was only the more clearly seen because of the earthliness, the flaws and imperfections, of the vessel that contained it. He was a very man, a man such as we are, and yet how much better and braver than we are! We see our own weakness in him, but we also see a strength beyond our own perfecting itself in and by his weakness, and yet a strength which is not beyond our reach, since it is in the gift of Christ. This very infirmity, for example, against which he prayed, keen as a stake driven through the body, only endeared him the more to those who knew and heard him, and made the power that was in him the more evidently Divine. Insignificant in presence, feeble in speech, assailed by a cruel malady which would have rendered another man loathsome and despicable,—how should

he have spoken with such force, such passion, and to such wondrous purpose, had he not have been inspired from on high? how should he have compassed sea and land to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, how have stood before king and governors, how have answered all gainsayers with a wisdom and spirit they could not withstand, how have pierced the hearts of myriads with compunction and have drawn them from their sins to the obedience of Christ, if God had not spoken by his mouth and wrought by his words? It was not his weakness that achieved these marvels; it was, rather, the strength of the "strong Son of God" which dwelt in him and turned his very infirmities to use. To the Galatians and the Corinthians he must have seemed as seems to us the skilful artist who draws the most exquisite and entrancing sounds from some rude instrument which will yield only harsh discords to our unskilled touch or breath; or, rather, he must have seemed like the rude pipe, or zithern, itself, played upon by some unseen and celestial power.

And to us he shews not less marvellous than to them. Traces both of his infirmity and of his strength are to be found in the Epistles that bear his name. Abrupt, rugged, often uncouth in style, they throb with a force of thought and passion such as we meet in no other writings. Lay your hand upon them, and you feel the Apostle's heart throbbing beneath them. No merely human words have won the ear and the heart of the world like his. Why? Because in him the strength of the Christ, who had been formed and cherished in him, was made perfect in and by his weakness; because we see how the

whole man was mastered and possessed by the power that dwelt in him, a power greater than he could adequately express. Shakespeare, paraphrasing St. Paul, says,—

> "He that of greatest works is finisher,
> Oft does them by the weakest minister."

But it is equally true that God often accomplishes his greatest works by ministers who, great in themselves, are all the greater because their greatness is cleft with infirmities through which we see the Divine power working within them.

And here we can hardly fail to remember that the axiom, the paradox, "Strength is perfected in weakness," which fell from the lips of Christ, is true even of Christ Himself. *He* was "made perfect by the things which He suffered" when He "took our infirmities upon him and carried our weaknesses." It is the glory of God shining through the humanity which He assumed that endears Him to us. He was greater when, for us men and our salvation, He laid aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, than when He was clothed with that glory. We should never have known God as He is had not Christ become less than He was—less, and yet more; God *in* man, but also God *and* man. It was by bringing God into the weaknesses of our mortal flesh that he brought God near to us, and home to us, and made us "partakers of his divine nature." And though, in one sense, God is always the same, though his being and glory admit of neither diminution nor increase, yet, in another sense, is not God the greater and more glorious when his glory is reflected by a world which He has

redeemed, and we are made of one heart and one will with Him? Shakespeare would have been as great if he had never have written one of his poems or plays; and yet would he have been as great? As great a man, perhaps, though even that is doubtful, but not so great an influence. And God would have been as glorious in Himself had He never come down and revealed his glory to us; but his glory would have been unseen, unreflected: and is it nothing to Him that we should see and partake his glory? Looking on Christ, then, we may say, that even the Divine Glory was perfected in human weakness.

Again: if nothing even in the life of Christ became Him like the leaving it, nevertheless his mortal weakness was most apparent on the Cross. In that He shared our death, as well as our life, He shewed Himself to be in very deed a man such as we are. And yet, here also strength was perfected in weakness. The Cross of Christ draws and dominates the world. In the death of the Cross, in which He most shewed Himself a sharer of our infirmity, He also showed a Divine strength, a love stronger than death. It was by thus abasing himself that He won his power over us. As we contemplate the Sufferer hanging on the tree, dying that we might live, we are more profoundly touched and moved and impressed than as we conceive of Him sitting on the throne of heaven amid "the quirings of the young-eyed cherubim." We cannot say that his weakness *was* his strength; for had He died weakly—reluctantly, complaining of the injustice of God and the ingratitude of men — we could not have honoured

Him as we do. But we may say that in Him strength was perfected in weakness. It is because He humbled Himself to death, because He endured death so meekly, so willingly, for us, that we try to live for Him, and count it shame if we do not love Him who so loved us.

And as it was with Him, so also it is with those who truly believe in Him. It is not their weakness which we admire, but the strength which is exercised by weakness and triumphs over it; it is not the cloud, but the sun that shines through the cloud; it is not the veil, but the divine beauty which shews through the veil; it is not their infirmities, but the Grace which is able to subdue their very infirmities to its own quality and complexion. Just as all men admire the constant resolute spirit which triumphs over the languors of a sickly frame and exacts from it well-nigh impossible achievements, so we admire the gracious spirit which masters and subdues the lusts of the flesh, the gusts of passion and self-will, and forces from a poor and ungenial temperament the "white flower of a blameless life" rich with the fragrance of a genial charity. We expect wisdom from the wise, and courtesy from the well-born, and service from the strong, and a gracious bearing from those who have been reared amid the refinements of culture. But when we see, as in the Church we often may see, men and women who are gentle and kindly, serviceable and wise, although they are simple and unlettered and have known no culture save that of the School of Christ, how can we but admire the grace of God in them? It is these "little ones" who are really great; it is these weak

ones who are truly strong. Strength is perfected in their weakness.

And as in their life, so also in their death, they often move us to wonder and admiration, to self-abasement, and yet to hope. We see them lingering on through weeks or months of pain and weakness with an unforced and cheerful patience; longing to depart, yet ready to remain; grateful for the slightest alleviation of their sufferings, yet unmurmuring however sharp their pangs may be; welcoming every kind word or word of comfort that may be spoken to them, but quite unconscious that, in their cheerful resignation and uncomplaining meekness, they are preaching to all who stand by them homilies of a more pathetic and impressive eloquence than the tongue of the orator can frame. Who that has ever witnessed such a spectacle as this, and seen the frail yet constant spirit pass into the great darkness radiant with the light of faith and love and hope, has not thanked the God who has given such gifts to men as can perfect strength even in the hour of mortal weakness? Who has not blushed that, in the vigour and pride of life, *he* should be doing so little for God and man, while even the weak and dying were doing so much? And who has not conceived the hope that the Grace which makes them more than conquerors over death may prove sufficient for him when *his* strength shall be turned to weakness, and death, the angel with a veil, shall be sent to summon him away?

CARPUS.

THE VINDICTIVE PSALMS VINDICATED.

PART III.

In the preceding number of The Expositor I undertook to prove, as a step towards the vindication of the Vindictive Psalms, that it was lawful and commendable in the children of the first covenant to pray for the temporal punishment of the wicked. The proof of this proposition was necessarily left incomplete, but, so far as it went, it assumed the following shape:—

1. The first Dispensation contained no clear revelation of a future state, and no revelation at all of a future state of rewards and punishments. But,

2. It established an elaborate system of temporal rewards and punishments; its theodicy dealing with men precisely as if there were no hereafter. And,

3. It provided a varied and extensive machinery for the exaction of these temporal punishments, so that its children were led to expect that, in one way or other, "every transgression and disobedience" would receive "its just recompense of reward," here, now, and at once.

But it now becomes necessary for us to observe—for at this point we take up the argument—that this system of temporal rewards and punishments was not always, and often seemed not to be when it really was, fully and equitably administered. The Israelites, and especially those who, like the Psalmists, lived under the monarchy, did not by any means find in practice what the theory of their religion taught them to expect—viz., conspicuous and even-handed justice. Of this we have abundant indica-

tions in the Old Testament. It is the mystery with which the Book of Job is occupied and which that Book leaves unsolved. It is one of the problems which perplex the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Jeremiah ventures to reason with God on the subject: "Wherefore doth the wicked prosper?" he asks; "wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" (Jerem. xii. 1.) The Jews of Ezekiel's time complain, though unjustly, that the ways of the Lord are not equal. (Ezek. xviii. 25, 29.) The Psalms teem with references to the apparent indifference of God to right and wrong, and the consequent presumption and daring of the wicked.[1] The sacred writers picture these latter as "in great power and spreading themselves like a green bay tree" (Psa. xxxvii. 35), as prospering in the world and increasing in riches (Psa. lxxiii. 12), and as plotting against the just and gnashing upon him with their teeth (Psa. xxxvii. 12). The Heathen are described as eating up God's people as they eat bread (Psa. liii. 4), as blaspheming Him daily (Psa. lxxiv. 10, 18, 22), and as shedding "the blood of his saints like water" (Psa. lxxix. 3), while the people of the Most High are represented as "cast off and put to shame" (Psa. xliv. 9), as made "a byword among the heathen" (verse 14), as fed "with the bread of tears" (Psa. lxxx. 5), as plagued all the day long and chastened every morning (Psa. lxxiii. 14). It is clear, then, that to the

[1] The silence of God is the subject of astonishment and complaint, in a large number of Psalms. Such are x. xiii. xxii. xxviii. lix. lxx. cix.; while a still larger number describe the audacity and seeming impunity of the wicked. Among these are Psalms vii. x. xii. xvii. xxii. xxxv. liii. lxxiv. cxl.

vision of the Jew, the justice of God, as administered in daily life, was marked by delays and failures and inequalities.

Nor is it any impeachment of that inflexible justice to admit that it was marked by *real* inequalities; to allow that, after establishing a system of temporal recompenses, God did not always insure their full and equitable distribution. For we must remember that then, as now, there *was* a judgment to come, a day for impartial and universal retribution, appointed in the counsels of God, though the Jew did not know of it, and that it was, no doubt, part of the Divine plan then, as it is now, that the inequalities which are inevitable in the world, except under a system which should be destructive either of faith or of free will, should be tolerated for a time, and find their remedy and adjustment hereafter. *We* can see, what the Jew could not, that the justice of God was not compromised even when the wicked blasphemed God with impunity, and when his saints were persecuted and oppressed. These things might be, even under the Mosaic law, and yet every man after all receive his just and perfect recompense.

I have spoken of these inequalities as inevitable even under the theocracy. That such was the case will be clear if we remember what has been stated before,[1] that the carrying out of the Mosaic Code, and especially the distribution of its punishments, depended for the most part on the officers of the Hebrew Commonwealth, the kings, judges, and magistrates, to whom this duty had been delegated

[1] THE EXPOSITOR, vol. iii. p. 116.

by God.[1] When we consider what these officers too frequently were like, it will cause us no surprise to find that, so far from vice and irreligion being visited and punished, the wicked often "walked on every side" and the "vilest men were exalted." With such men as Saul, Ahab, and Manasseh for God's "ministers and avengers to execute wrath," what wonder if the scheme of temporal retributions was but unequally and corruptly administered?

But from whatever causes they arose—and they arose from more causes than one—it is undeniable that there were occasionally conspicuous and flagrant inequalities, and it is clear, too, that the Jews suspected them where they did not really exist (Ezek. xviii. 4). Let us now, therefore, consider what effect such inequalities would have, and had as a matter of fact, on the minds of devout Jews, on the minds, for example, of the Psalmists. It is obvious that every failure, or apparent failure of justice, every instance of apparent non-retribution, would cause them the greatest perplexity and distress. Suckled as they had been in the belief that "the Lord is a God of recompenses," and that if men are to receive any recompense at all for their good and evil deeds, they must receive it during this present life; confirmed, too, as they had been in the expectation of seeing such recompense meted out to men before their very eyes, the prosperity of the wicked and the

[1] It is very noticeable that such officers are called "gods," אֱלֹהִים (Exod. xxi. 6; Psa. xlv. 6; lxxxii. 6, &c.), as being invested with his authority and as acting in his name. It would seem from the passage last cited ("I have said ye are gods," &c.), taken in connection with St. John x. 35, as if this name were given them by God himself. We know He gave this title to Moses (Exod. vii. 1), as being his representative.

impunity of the wrong-doer would occasion them, as we know it did, the keenest doubts and questionings and mental agonies. "Why does the Judge of all the earth permit it? Why does He suffer men to set Him at defiance? Why does He not stop them in their career of crime? Why not awake and vindicate his outraged honour?" Such were the questions they anxiously asked themselves.[1] And not without good reason, for, according to their theodicy, nothing could be more prejudicial to religion, nothing more fatal to morality, than the escape of the guilty. If sin was to go unpunished, where was justice? where was holiness? where was the faithfulness of God to his word? where, in short, was the sin-hating and sin-avenging Deity? They conceived it their duty, therefore, in the interests of morality and piety, to cry to God for vengeance, to call upon him to "awake," to "disappoint" the evil-doers, to "cast them down," to "give them after the work of their hands" (Psa. xxviii. 4). It seemed to them to be a simple dictate of piety to pray God for the confusion and excision of wicked men. Nor was it possible for them to think otherwise. Professing such a creed as they professed, animated by such convictions as they had drawn in with every breath they drew, to pray for the repression, confusion, and, if need be, the destruction[2] of the wicked, was for the Jew an imperative religious duty. It was this for the following reasons:—

First. Because such Divine interpositions were necessary in order to vindicate the character of God.

[1] See, *e.g.*, Psalms x. 12; xii. i.; xliv. 23; lxxiv. 22; xciv. 3.

[2] See pp. 190–199.

The silence, the seeming non-interference, of Jehovah was very liable to be misconstrued. It might minister to Atheism. Men might ask, nay, they did ask, whether there was a moral governor of the world at all. Fools said in their hearts, "There is no God" (Psalms xiv. 1; liii. 1; x. 4 *Heb.*), or else sneeringly demanded, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" (Psa lxxiii. 11.) Or if it did not lead to blank Atheism, it favoured impious views of the Godhead. Men thought He "was altogether such a one as" themselves (Psa. l. 21). Sometimes the wicked "said in his heart, God hath forgotten" (Psa. x. 11), thus virtually denying his omniscience; sometimes he would contemptuously ask, "Who doth hear?" (Psa. lix. 7), thus practically disputing his omnipresence. And, worst of all, those who retained a belief in God, even they concluded that He was indifferent to oppression and wrong. "The Lord shall not see," they said, "neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." (Psa. xciv. 7; *cf.* x. 4 (*Heb.*);[1] x. 13.) On this ground, then, because God's character was compromised by the impunity of the sinner, add because retribution was necessary in order to "justify the ways of God to men," it was a religious duty in the Jew to pray for vengeance on the wrong-doer.

But it was, in the second place, a duty which the Hebrew owed to his religion, to pray thus. By the failure of justice, and especially by the impunity of the oppressor, the one true religion, the one belief

[1] The literal translation of Psa. x. 4, a verse which I have twice quoted, is,—"The wicked in his arrogance [saith], 'He will not require,' [there is] 'no God,' [these are] all his thoughts."

which was the salt of the earth, the one faith which held fast by the living God, was discredited and brought into contempt. If God was to look on unmoved while cruelties and impieties were practised under his very eyes, the Heathen might well ask, "Where is thy God?" (Psa. xlii. 10.) Nay, they did more than this. Emboldened by the silence of Israel's God, they "took crafty counsel against his people:" they said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (Psa. lxxxiii. 4). Now, to prevent this, to protect the one lamp which illumined the darkness of the world from being extinguished: to save the chosen seed, which alone witnessed for the truth, from being crushed and silenced by the powers of Heathendom, the Psalmists cried to God, and I contend they were bound by their creed to cry, that He would confound the oppressor and cast him down, so that the Divine righteousness might "be openly shewed in the sight of the heathen" (Psa. xcviii. 2), and "that the nations" might "know themselves to be but men" (Psa. ix. 20).

Nor is it less clear that to pray for fitting manifestations of God's righteous anger was also a duty which the Jew owed to the sacred cause of morality. Exemplary punishment of wrong-doers was necessary for the prevention of crime. If no Nemesis tracked the steps of guilt, what wonder if the feet of men became "swift to shed blood," and if "destruction and misery were in their ways?" Let but "the sentence against an evil work" be "not executed speedily," and "the heart of the sons of

men would be fully set in them to do evil." They would "slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless, and say, The Lord shall not see" (Psa. xciv. 6). It was necessary, therefore, to pray for retribution, to pray that evil men should be "confounded," that evil courses should be checked, in order to prevent a reign of terror, in order to procure the peace of the Commonwealth, the maintenance of right, and the security of life and property. It was a duty which the Jew owed to society to cry to God to make an example of the wicked in order that others might take warning, and that "the man of the earth" might "no more oppress" (Psa. x. 18).

But, furthermore,—and I regard this as very noteworthy—the Jews, and of course the Psalmists among them, were not left to conjecture what their duty might be with regard to crime and wrong; they were not left to infer it from such considerations as have been just mentioned; but they had been expressly taught, and that in the most impressive manner, that they were bound to look for and pray for the curse of God on the guilty. For when the tribes of Israel entered the land of promise, when they were first settled as the subjects of the Theocracy, on the very day that they "became the people of the Lord" (Deut. xxvii. 9), they were made to join in a solemn public act of Commination. Standing near Mount Ebal, they heard, one by one, from the lips of the Levites, "the curses of God against impenitent sinners," and to these, one by one, the lips of the people pronounced the "Amen" of assent—probably the Amen of entreaty.

The whole nation, therefore, had been taught of God in and by the law to invoke curses on the transgressors of the law; they had been taught that retribution was their concern as well as his; that it was as much their duty to implore vengeance as it was his design to inflict it. So far, then, as the Psalmists foretell the just judgment of God against sinners, and so far as they pray for it, they are but following the precedent which their inspired Lawgiver had furnished them; they are but reciting the lesson which their forefathers had learned from Almighty God Himself.

Nor is it too much to say that the discharge of this duty, which was neither more nor less than *the duty of pronouncing comminations and imprecations against sinners*, was more necessary in the times of the Psalmists than at an earlier period of Jewish history. For when the monarchy was set up amongst the Jews, and when a visible king became the representative and viceroy of the Invisible, the latter would appear to have withdrawn Himself more and more into the thick darkness, and to have left the execution of his laws to the delegates whom He had appointed. In other words, the distribution of punishments was effected less openly than before by the finger of God, and more obviously than before by the officers of State. It was now their recognized duty to correct, and in some cases to cut off, the wrong-doer. (Psa. ci. 5, 8.) But what if they were indifferent to justice? What if they connived at wickedness, as was too commonly the case? What should the pious Israelite do then? *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* It was in vain to implore their interference; in vain for David, for example, to pray

Saul to requite Doeg, or for Zechariah to hope for justice from Joash (2 Chron. xxiv. 20–22), or for the Maccabees to invoke the secular arm against "that wicked Alcimus" (1 Macc. vii. 9). They were driven, consequently, to appeal to a higher tribunal, to the Supreme Magistrate and Executor of Jewish law; and they pray Him, in the interests of justice and humanity, to "look upon it and require it," that so such miscreants might not go unpunished.

And if, in the discharge of this duty, they sometimes prayed, not merely in general terms for the punishment, but for the *destruction* of sinners,—that they might be "rooted out of the land of the living" (Psalms lii. 5; lxix. 28), or that they might be "cut off" in their wickedness (Psalms xii. 3; liv. 5; xciv. 23; cxliii. 12), who can wonder at it? For the Hebrews had been taught with a terrible distinctness, and that again and again, that God's way of punishing heinous sin was by destroying the sinner. They could have no doubts as to his settled plan and purpose in this respect, for destruction—the death of the guilty—had ever been his sentence upon flagrant guilt. They had before them, to begin with, the fate of the antediluvians. God had once, as they read it, scoured the whole earth of its corrupt and impious inhabitants. He had "brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." They remembered, too, what was recorded of the Cities of the Plain. God had checked *their* profligacy by simply blotting them out of the book of life. They had a pattern of his dealings with the rebellious Heathen in the case of the Egyptians. "The waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left" (Psa. cvi.

11). They had a still more striking instance in the seven nations of Canaan. Their own forefathers had been commissioned in God's name to exterminate them. "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: thou shalt utterly destroy them" (Deut. xx. 16, 17). The Jews of a later age, an age almost contemporaneous with that of the composition of the earlier Psalms, were employed by God to smite a neighbouring nation, the Amalekites, for a sin committed four hundred years before their time. For this they were "utterly to destroy all that they" had; to "slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Sam. xv. 3). The author of many of the Psalms had himself, as the viceroy of God and with the help of God (Psalms xxi. 9; xviii. 40), devoted the population of entire cities, "all the cities of the children of Ammon," to a dreadful death (2 Sam. xii. 31). A few centuries later, when some of the Psalms were still being written, the Hebrew people saw an entire host—"an hundred, fourscore, and five thousand" Assyrians destroyed in one night by the direct visitation of God. With these records before their eyes —and they had other proofs which it is needless to specify—the Jews could not fail to see that destruction was the doom denounced by God against the enemies and oppressors of his people.

And they had no less convincing proofs that a similar fate was designed for the rebellious Israelite. Not merely had God repeatedly declared that such should be "cut off," but they had terrible instances of the fulfilment of the threat. They could not forget the "very great plague" of Kibroth-Hat-

taavah (Numb. xi. 33), nor Korah and his company, who "went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them" (Numb. xvi. 33), nor yet the "fourteen thousand and seven hundred" who died in the plague that followed the earthquake, nor the "four and twenty thousand" "slain for Peor's sake in the day of the plague."[1] And nearer their own times the Psalmists had had proofs that God's purpose was in nowise changed. The sin of the two priests, Hophni and Phinehas, was punished by death. It was the Lord who slew them in battle. (1 Sam. ii. 25.) The peasants of Beth-shemesh looked into the ark, and forfeited their lives. Fifty thousand and three score and ten men are said to have fallen victims to their sacrilegious curiosity.[2] It were easy to adduce a score of instances in which the violation of God's law was visited by instant destruction, but those already cited will suffice. Now, these startling providences must have taught the Psalmists that it was God's will and pleasure to requite the sinner by destroying him. What more natural, then, than that, when they prayed, as they were bound to do, for exemplary vengeance on the

[1] I do not wish the reader to infer, from my citing these numbers, that we are pledged to a belief in their strict accuracy in every case. Numbers are notoriously liable to be altered in the course of transcription. St. Paul states the number of those who fell in one day on account of Baal Peor at "*three* and twenty thousand" (1 Cor. x. 8).

[2] The numbers here are allowed to be incorrect. A village like Beth-shemesh can hardly have had 50,000 inhabitants. And the Hebrew text itself suggests the suspicion of a mistake. Literally translated, it runs: "And he smote of the people seventy men, fifty thousand men." Five ancient MSS. omit the last three words. So also does Josephus. There is little doubt they represent a marginal gloss, which has been accidentally embodied in the text.

transgressor, they should pray for his death? To pray thus would seem to them to be simply equivalent to the petition, "Thy will be done."

But fully to understand how thoroughly the children of Israel had been schooled and trained to seek the destruction of wicked men, one additional fact must be remembered, viz., that not merely the magistrates, but the nation at large, had been constituted by God, in certain cases, the ministers of destruction: they were required, that is to say, to put flagitious sinners to death *with their own hands*. I have already referred to the case of the Canaanites and Amalekites, where the soldiers of Israel were charged with the extermination of entire nations. But it was not merely in the shock of battle, or after victory, that the Jews were made God's executioners: they were expected to inflict capital punishments on their own countrymen, calmly, deliberately, and as carrying out a judicial sentence. The Israelite who gave his seed to Molech was to be publicly destroyed by his fellow-Israelites. "All the people of the land shall stone him with stones" (Levit. xx. 2). The wizard was to die a like death at their hands. So was the blasphemer (Levit. xxiv. 14); the Sabbath-breaker (Numb. xv. 36); the false prophet (Deut. xiii. 10); the idolater (Deut. xiii. 15). And these sentences they were compelled to carry out. The son of Shelomith was stoned by the whole congregation (Levit. xxiv. 23). It was the whole congregation who put to death the "man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath-day." It was "all Israel" that stoned Achan (Josh. vii. 25). It was "all the

sons of Levi" who went "in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp and slew every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour," till about three thousand men had fallen by their sword (Exod. xxxii. 27, 28). And in each case we find this duty was entailed upon them by express Divine command. Can we wonder then that, in after ages, the descendants of these very men, when they found themselves debarred by circumstances from carrying out a sentence of death which was still in force, cried to God to inflict it? What more natural than that men who should have been the executioners of God, who should have stoned the sinner with their own hands, had not discipline been relaxed, should pray God to execute his own laws, laws which they found themselves powerless to fulfil?

We are forced, consequently, to the conclusion that it was not only lawful and commendable in the Psalmists to pray for the temporal punishment of the wicked, but that every pious Jew (and especially such Jews as the Psalmists, who were in some sense the guardians of morality and religion) had been taught, and was bound, as a duty which he owed to society, to religion, and to God, to pray for those specific temporal punishments which were the sanctions of the Old Testament law. If it was right for the Jew to pray for the punishment of evil-doers at all, then, plainly, it was right for him to pray for the only punishments of which he had any certain knowledge, in other words, for temporal, and amongst these *retaliatory* and *capital*, punishments.

And if these conclusions are correct: if, that is to say, the Psalmists were bound, by the social and religious conditions under which they lived, to desire, and to pray for, the just and adequate retribution of guilt; then it follows, as a natural consequence, that they are not to be blamed, if they also pray for *immediate* retribution. For it is obvious that every reason which they experienced for desiring temporal punishment was equally a reason for seeking instant temporal punishment. Was it desirable, for example, for the vindication of the righteousness of God, that the wicked should be put to shame? Then it was desirable that this should be done at once; because, so long as it was left undone, so long would the righteousness of God be compromised and questioned. Was it expedient for the good of society that evil-doers should be cut off? Then it was expedient that they should be cut off quickly; because, so long as they were unmolested, so long would the peace of society be endangered. Was it essential for the repression of crime that an example should be made of the criminal? Then the sooner the better, in order that the connection between the sin and the retribution might be the more conspicuous. It is evident, then, that men with such a creed and such convictions as inspired and governed those who penned the Psalms were bound to pray, not only for the punishment of the wicked (for that a Christian is permitted, under certain well-defined limitations, to do), but for the temporal, and for the *instant* temporal, punishment of all the enemies of God,—which was precisely the proposition which we undertook to prove.

And now we begin to see more clearly, not only why the Jews could, but also why Christians cannot, pray thus; why petitions which were commendable in them would be inexcusable in us. We have just said that the Christian, like the Jew, may pray for the punishment of the wicked.[1] Such prayers are recorded —and recorded, we can hardly doubt, for our imitation—in the New Testament. They are the prayers, be it remembered, of God's spotless saints. It is the blessed St. Paul who writes, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord *reward him* according to his works" (2 Tim. iv. 14). It is the gentle St. Paul, the same who elsewhere says, "I could wish that myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren," &c. (Rom. ix. 3), who pronounces the imprecation, "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xvi. 22). It is the glorified saints under the altar who cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. vi. 10.) So that in this matter of imprecating retribution on the enemies of the Lord, the New Testament is in thorough accord with the Old. The cry for requital is by no means peculiar to the Psalmists, but the glorious company of the apostles and the noble army of martyrs take up and re-echo the appeal. And if, in these

[1] I am very far from wishing to imply that either Christian or Jew is permitted to pray for punishment, because of the pain—whether the *poena damni* or the *poena sensus*—which it brings with it. To desire it on this ground would be sheer vindictiveness; to pray for it with this in view would be contrary both to the Law and the Gospel. Neither was Jew, nor is Christian, justified in praying for the punishment of sinners with any other motives than the glory of God, the good of society, and the correction of the sinner himself.

latter days, the cry is seldom heard from Christian lips, may it not be, not that our faith is more enlightened, but that our love and zeal are less fervent? When we remember that it is not for the glory of God now, any more than it was in the apostolic age, that the sinner should escape, and that sin is now no less abominable, no less hateful and dishonouring to God than it was formerly, it is difficult to understand why the prayer for a just retribution should be less needed or less appropriate than it was in the infancy of the Christian Church.

It must not be supposed, however, that the Christian has the same imperious reasons for beseeching God for retribution that the Jew had. With the latter it was a question of life and death. He had reason to fear that his religion could not exist without it. The Christian has no such fear, and consequently he does not experience the same need for such prayers. It is for this reason, I imagine, among others, that while such prayers may be counted in the Old Testament by scores, in the New there are but three or four.

We see, then, that Christians, as well as Jews, may pray, and perhaps ought to pray, for the punishment of the guilty, for the glory of God. But at this point the resemblance ceases. The Jew prayed for instant visible temporal retribution; the Christian cannot lawfully pray for it and look for it except from the Judge of the quick and dead. For *he* knows that the present life is not all; knows how "*Deus est patiens, quia aeternus;*" knows too that "though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small." The Jew believed

the present world to be a state of rewards and punishments; he therefore prayed for temporal punishments. The Christian is taught that the Deity reserves his chief recompenses for the world to come; he therefore looks for retribution and prays for it, so far as he prays for it at all, hereafter.

But there is this further reason why the Christian cannot pray as did the Jew; why he cannot pray, *i.e.*, for the "destruction" even of the chief of sinners. He knows that the longer a man lives, the greater, humanly speaking, will be his chance of conversion. For him, therefore, to pray for the excision of the sinner would be, in effect to pray for the shortening of his day of grace; it would be to ask God to "cut him off even in the blossom of his sins;" to send him to his grave, no "reckoning made, with all his imperfections on his head." But the Jews appear to have had no hopes of the conversion, at any rate, of the Heathen, and many of the imprecations, it must be remembered, were directed against the Heathen. They had no commission to preach to them, or to seek to win them for God. They could not but remember that the only remedy which Divine mercy had found for the sin of the Canaanites and others was extermination—extermination, root and branch, for the good of the world. It was still for the good of the world, they judged, that sinners should be taken out of the way, and the sooner the better, because of their pernicious example. It is for this reason, among others, that whilst the Christian is bound to echo the prayer of his Master, "Spare it," the Jewish cry could only be, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" And

hence we find, what indeed we might expect to find, that the last martyr of Judaism, thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of his religion, passed away with the prayer on his lips, "The Lord look on it and require it," whilst the protomartyr of Christianity, equally true to the teachings of his nobler creed, fell asleep, after the loud and earnest cry, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60).

But there are other, and perhaps more cogent reasons, why the children of the "better covenant, established upon *better promises*," cannot pray as did the children of the Law, and I hope in a succeeding paper to indicate some of them. I shall also hope, by a comparison of the imprecations of the Psalmists with those of the Prophets and with other parts of the Scripture to prove, beyond possibility of challenge, the lawfulness of such imprecations in Hebrew lips. At present I must content myself with the remark that enough has, I venture to hope, been said to shew that in this one fact, that the view of the Psalmists was limited to this present life, and did not embrace the vision of a "judgment to come," we have both the secret and the vindication of the Vindictive Psalms. Only let it be remembered that in their days life and immortality had not been brought to light; that it is since their days that the realm and recompenses of the future have been disclosed to view, and their imprecations will be found to be, not the "impatient and revengeful" utterances of unchastened and cruel minds, but the fervid breathings of a true piety and righteous zeal for the glory of God.

JOSEPH HAMMOND.

THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

V.—SARDIS. (*Revelation* iii. 1–6.)

If the secular history of an Asiatic city had any legitimate connection with the interpretation of these Epistles, few names would offer a field of wider interest to the Expositor than that ancient capital of the old Lydian monarchy through whose agora flowed the Pactolus with its golden sands; which was famed, in its remote past, at once for its manufactures and its coinage; whose name recalls the old tales, half mythical, half historical, of Gyges and of Crœsus. It preceded Miletus and Thyatira in the fame of its purple dye, and Corinth in that of its bronze, or compound metal known as electrum. Following in the track, however, of the method I have hitherto pursued, I cast but a passing glance at these external facts and seek rather to ascertain, as far as may be, what was its actual state at the time when the Apostle's mind was turned to its perils and its privileges, in his Patmos exile. The one event which then, probably, influenced its condition was the great earthquake that had laid it waste in the reign of Tiberius (A.D. 17), and had been followed by a desolating pestilence. From this, however, the population had sufficiently recovered a few years later to be among the candidates for the honour of erecting a temple to the Emperor, who had then come to their aid; and at the time of the Apocalypse it was probably a fairly flourishing community. Its dominant worship, to judge

by the ruins of the stately temple that still remain, was that of the great mother-goddess, Cybele; and that worship, it will be remembered, with its eunuch priesthood and its orgiastic rites, was one which tended, as much almost as that of Dionysos or Aphrodite, to sins of a foul and dark impurity. In the midst of such a population, rescued from such a cultus, we have to think of the small community of disciples who were addressed, through their Angel, or Bishop, as the Church of Sardis.

Here, as before, we may well assume that the name by which the Lord reveals Himself at the opening of this Message had a special bearing upon the state of the Angel and the Church to whom the Message was to be transmitted. The Spirit was thought of, to use the later terminology of the Church, as the "Giver of Life" (*τὸ ζωοποιὸν*) and of all its seven-fold gifts; the seven Spirits of i. 4 and v. 6 were but forms of that Divine life which He—one, yet manifold—imparted. These He, the Lord of the Churches, possessed and could call his own; for thus it is that He can "quicken whom he will:" thus He can impart the Divine life, in all its marvellous variety, to those who stand in need of it. And He is also, as in the opening vision of the Seer, "he that hath the seven stars" which represent the guides and teachers of the Church; He is able, that is, to bring together the gifts of life and the ministry for which those gifts are needed. If those who minister are without the gifts, it is because they have not asked for them. The union of the two attributes is, therefore, one both of encouragement

and of warning. If each star shines with its peculiar radiancy, it is because it is under the power and influence of the seven-fold Spirit; if it has no life or light, and ceases to shine, there is the danger of its falling away from its place in that glorious band and becoming as one of the "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

And here both the warning and the encouragement were needed. Of the Angel of the Church at Sardis, and, by implication, of the Society which he represented, it was said, "*Thou hast a name that thou livest*,"—hast the shew and the fame of a spiritual life,—and yet thou "art dead." The cause of that loss of vitality and strength is to be found, we may believe, in the absence, in this instance, of the "tribulation" and the "endurance" which were so prominent in the judgment passed on the works of other Churches. The members of the Sardian Church had not been tried in the fire of adversity; life had not been braced and strengthened by the conflict with persecution: men had been content with "works" of a lower and less noble kind, occasional acts of charity, the routine of decent conduct. There had been no open scandals; Sardis was still recognized by the other Churches as a living and true member of the great family of God, was even, it may be, winning their admiration for its seemingly energetic vitality. And yet the chill and the paralysis which were the forerunners of the end were slowly creeping in upon its life; death, not life, was already master of the position, the dominant characteristic

of the Church as a whole, and of its spiritual ruler in particular.

To the Angel and the Church that was gliding into this state of spiritual torpor and death, the command comes, "*Be watchful;*" *become* as one who watches (*γίνου γρηγορῶν*); rouse thyself, and stand as one who seeks to cast off that torpor. The words that follow present a singular diversity of reading,—"*Strengthen the things that remain, which* ARE *ready to die*" (*ἃ μέλλει ἀποθανεῖν*); or, which *were* at the point to die (*ἃ ἔμελλον*); or, lastly, "which thou wert at the point to lose" (*ἃ ἔμελλες ἀποβάλλειν*). The meaning is, in all cases, substantially the same, but the best supported reading seems the second. In any case, the question meets us, What are those "things that are ready to die"? Are they those *members* of the Church in whom there were yet some signs of life, however feeble? or those *elements* of life, Christian graces and activities, which were not yet actually extinct? Both interpretations are, of course, grammatically tenable; but the distinct mention afterwards of persons as such, in the "few names" that are singled out for special praise, inclines the balance in favour of the latter. The Angel of the Church is called to wake up from his slumbers, and then to strengthen in himself the energy, the zeal, the love, the hope, the faith, which were so nearly dying out. In doing this he could not fail to help the persons also in whom this flagging of all spiritual vigour had been most conspicuous, or, in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to "lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees" (xii. 12).

The reason for this command is then given. "*I have not found thy works perfect*" (literally, *not filled up* to the measure which God requires of thee) "*before God.*" And then, as in the analogous warning to the Angel of the Church of Ephesus (Chap. ii. 5), there came other words: "*Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard.*" Personally it was an admonition to the Bishop of the Sardian Church to go back mentally to the time when he was yet a catechumen in the Christian Church, to recall the steps by which he then came under the oral teaching of apostles, or bishop-elders, how the traditions thus received in doctrine, ethics, discipline, had formed a complete and consistent whole—how, afterwards (here the change of tense, from the perfect to the aorist, points, it may be, to some definite epoch in his life, as the laying on of the hands of the presbytery when he was consecrated to his ministerial office) he heard, in solemn words, what was the true pattern and standard of the duties of his office.[1] The counsel to "*keep*" all this is identical with that given by St. Paul to Timotheus, to "keep the good thing which had been committed to his charge" (2 Tim. i. 14), to "hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard from his master among many witnesses" (2 Tim. i. 13; ii. 2). In doing this, and in this alone, there would be the witness that he was indeed "*repenting*," not mourning with a fruitless

[1] It seems right to mention the deeper meaning which Ewald gives to the words "thou hast received," as implying the reception of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. So taken they would appeal to an inward experience like that to which St. Paul appeals in writing to the Galatians (Gal. iii. 2). I do not accept this as excluding the interpretation given above, but it is, perhaps, implied in the words, "*how* thou hast received," stress being laid on the *manner*, the inward as well as outward accompaniments, of the instruction that had been imparted.

regret over opportunities that had been lost and gifts that had been wasted, but entering on a new life with new impulses and new principles of action.

As in the Message to Pergamos, so here also, the exhortation is followed by a warning: "Except thou watch, therefore, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Here, again, we have the language which we commonly associate with the great second Advent boldly transferred to some nearer and more immediate judgment. The very phrase, "as a thief," implies a reference to, and therefore the knowledge of, those "words of the Lord Jesus" in which, in connection with the self-same command to "watch," He had added, "This know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through" (Luke xii. 39), and is, in fact, an echo of what, through those words, and the like teaching of St. Paul delivered to the Thessalonian and other Churches, had become a proverbial form of speech, that "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. v. 2). Dependent as this coming was on the state of the Sardian Church and its ruler, liable to be averted on renewed watchfulness and repentance, it must, of necessity, refer to the discipline, at once regulative and reformatory, penal, yet not necessarily inflicting an irremediable penalty, with which, in unlooked-for ways and at an unexpected season, the Lord would come upon the Church. Persecutions, distress, the open shame of being noted as a dead Church, exclusion from fellowship with other Churches, who should no longer

recognize even its "name" to live—these should do their work, teaching all who were yet capable of being taught, warning others by the punishment of the hardened and impenitent.

In other Messages, as we have seen, first the good that exists in the Church is recognized, and then the evil that had mingled with it is marked out for censure. Here, unhappily, the evil was dominant, and the sharp words of rebuke had therefore to be spoken first. But the Judge of all the earth, then as ever, recognized and singled out for praise even the ten righteous men, if such there were, who had kept their integrity in the midst of a general corruption. "*Thou hast a few names*" ("names" for "persons," as in Acts i. 15, but with, perhaps, the underlying thought that He who speaks is one that "knows his own sheep by name," and looks on each in his own distinct personality) "*even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.*" The meaning of such an image lies of course on the surface. That which is to the spirit what the garments are to the body is the outward form of life which men behold, which in part expresses and symbolizes the character, in part hides from view the nakedness of its personality. Those, then, who had not defiled their garments were those whose outward lives had been free from impurity, who, in the analogous language of St. Jude, had kept that garment from being "spotted by the flesh" (Jude, verse 23). The same thought was, it is clear, symbolized in the practice of the early Church, possibly even a primitive practice, of clothing those who were baptized in white garments,—the "chrisms" of old English liturgical usage,—as a witness of

the purity of life to which their baptism pledged them. The parable of the man that "had not on a wedding-garment" must have done something to fix this symbolism in the Apostle's mind, and this implied reference to that parable helps us there also to understand the true meaning of the symbol, and so to eliminate the more fantastic interpretations which see in it either the imputed righteousness of Christ or the outward ordinance of baptism.

The reward for this purity might seem at first to be the purity itself. They who have not defiled their garments are to "walk" with Christ "in white," for they are worthy. Here, however, it would seem, from the vivid pictures, in Chaps. vi. 11, vii. 9, 13, xix. 8, of the white robes given to the martyred saints, of those who were clothed with white robes which they had made white in the "blood of the Lamb," as if more than this were meant. The "white robes" are such "as no fuller on earth could whiten them," glorious and bright as those which the Apostle had seen on the night of the Transfiguration. In other words, as the reward of the pure in heart is that they shall see God, so that of those who have kept their garments from defilement is like in kind but more glorious in degree,—a purity glorified and transfigured, pure even as He, our Lord, is pure. Of that reward they are "worthy," and no dread of scholastic formulæ of "congruity" or "condignity" need hinder us from accepting the word in its natural meaning. There is a worthiness, a meetness, when the life prepares the way for the reward, and the reward is the completion and consummation of the life, which we need not shrink

from recognizing, as Christ Himself recognized it, and the very essence of which lies, in part, in the absence of any claim or consciousness of merit.

In this Message, and in this alone, the reward of him that overcometh is in part anticipated in what precedes it. If there is any difference, it is perhaps to be found in the use of the word περιβαλεῖται—he shall be clothed, or "shall clothe himself," as denoting a more solemn investiture than this simple "walking in white." And looking to the fact of the obvious familiarity of the Evangelist with the prophecy of Zechariah, we can scarcely avoid seeing here a reference to the mysterious vision in which the High Priest Joshua, the son of Jozedek, stood face to face in conflict with Satan, the enemy and accuser, and, having overcome in that trial, had the fair mitre set upon his head, and was clothed in new raiment (Zech. iii. 4, 5).[1]

The reward, however, goes beyond this: "*And I will not blot out his name from the book of life.*" The words contain a whole mine of half-latent imagery.

[1] I ought not to pass over, though I cannot altogether accept, Professor Lightfoot's interesting suggestion, in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians (p. 22), that here, and in the parallel passage in the Message to Laodicea, there is a reference to the purple dyes for which both the cities, like Thyatira, were more or less famous. The image seems to me too natural and universal to require the assumption of any such direct reference. When we come to the description of those who had "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14), the case is, however, stronger. We can imagine the glance of the Apostle falling on one of the great dyeing vats used in the staple trade of the town, and seeing the linen garments steeped in the crimson fluid that looked like blood, and of his being thus led to think of those whose inmost life, steeped in the spirit of sacrifice of which the blood of Christ is the symbol, should emerge from that process, not "red like crimson," but, by the strangest of all paradoxes, "white as wool."

First we note the special appropriateness of the promise as given to those who were exceptions to the statement, too true of the greater part of the Church to which they belonged, that "they had a name that they lived, and yet were dead," whose names therefore would be blotted out of the book of life, which recorded only those of living members. The symbolism was one of the oldest in the Hebrew Scriptures, and occurring, as it does, for the first time in Exod. xxxii. 32 ("Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written"), probably had its origin in the political life of Egypt. It was a natural expansion of the thought that one who was convicted of treachery or disloyalty to the State of which he was a member, should, as the preliminary to the execution of the sentence of death or banishment, have his name struck out from the register of its citizens.[1] So in the fiery wrath of the 69th Psalm the extremest malediction is, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;" and this stands parallel with the clause, "Let them not be written among the righteous" (Psa. lxix. 28). So in Daniel's vision of the resurrection, those who were delivered out of tribulation, included "every one that should be found written in the book" (Dan. xii. 1). To this image the Seer returns again and again. All should worship the Beast, except those whose names were written in the book of life of the Lamb (xiii. 3; xvii. 8). They only should enter into the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem (xxi. 27). The

[1] Students of Greek history will remember the scene in which Critias, as the prelude to the condemnation of Theramenes, struck his name out of the list of the Three Thousand who could not be condemned except by a formal sentence of the Council.

words of the Message to the Church of Sardis are valuable as shewing that to have the name so written does not of itself secure, as by a Divine decree, the indefectibility of perseverance. Of not a few it would be true, the very promise implying the warning, that their names, though they had been written in it, would hereafter be blotted out. The close of the Message comes as the natural sequel of this promise: "*I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.*" Here we have in part the distinct echo of words which the Apostle had once heard from his Master's lips while He was yet on earth: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 32); or, as in Luke xii. 8, "before the angels of God." In the connection between this promise and the names that were written in the book of life we may trace, I believe, a probable reference to the strange Psalm of the Sons of Korah (Psa. lxxxv.), which appears to have been sung at some enrolment of proselytes from Egypt and Babylon, from Philistia and Tyre and Ethiopia, among the citizens of Zion. There also we read that when the Lord writeth up the people, takes, as it were, the census of the holy city, He shall rehearse, or count, uttering as He counts, the names of those who were thus registered in what the Prophet Ezekiel, at a somewhat later date, calls "the writing of the house of Israel" (Ezek. xiii. 9). E. H. PLUMPTRE.

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

CHAPTER III.

DID not that which the Apostle had been saying tend to lower the dignity of the chosen people of God and to depreciate the value of its privileges? *What advantage hath the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision?* To this question he replies in Verse 2. *Much every way, chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.* Here for *chiefly* we should read, *in the first place.* The Apostle begins an enumeration which he does not continue, being diverted from it into a different line of thought. There was no necessary connection between circumcision and the having the oracles of God committed to them, but it was a matter of fact that the people who observed the ordinance of circumcision was that which was entrusted with the oracles of God. *The oracles of God* is an expression which covers all the contents of the Old Testament. These oracles consisted of commandments, threats, and promises, more particularly the promises relating to the Messiah, which are found in the earliest record of Moses, and are continually renewed.

It might, however, be objected that the advantage of this privilege was contingent on the will of man, and depended on the belief of those to whom these oracles were committed, and so, that God's gracious designs might be disappointed, and his faith, that is his faithfulness in making his promises good, of none effect.

This, in Verse 4, the Apostle indignantly denies. *God forbid, yea, let God be,*—literally, *become,* that

is, prove, turn out to be *faithful*, true to his word, —*though every man should be found to be a liar.* Then follows the quotation from the Psalms: *That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.* Rather, *Mightest gain thy cause when thou pleadest with men.*

The Apostle then proceeds to consider a new objection. *If our unrighteousness commend*, that is, establish, or bring into clearer light, *the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance?* Literally, who inflicts the marks of his wrath.——*I speak as a man*, that is, not according to the real state of the case, or by virtue of my apostolical character, or as moved by the Holy Ghost. It is only the language of human infirmity drawing a wrong inference from true premises; for though our unrighteousness does establish the righteousness of God, it does not follow that God is unrighteous in any of his dealings. This is an inference which the Apostle, at Verse 6, rejects with the same expression of abhorrence as the one immediately preceding, *God forbid;* and he points out its absurdity in the question: *For then how shall God judge the world?* If God was not a righteous Judge, He could not be a Judge at all. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

In Verse 7 *the truth of God* is contrasted with the lie of man: it comprehends the holiness of his nature, as *the lie* all that is evil in man; as in the Apocalypse, Chap. xxii. 15, *Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie is excluded from the kingdom.*

At Verse 8 there is a break in the structure of the sentence. Having begun with a series of ques-

tions, instead of proceeding with it to the end he exchanges the interrogative form for the hortative —*Let us do evil, that good may come.*

St. Paul's argument in this passage may be thrown into the form of a little dialogue between himself and an imaginary opponent :—

O.—If *my lie* has been the occasion of a more abundant display of God's truth for the promotion of his glory, why am I to be punished ?

P.—On two accounts : in the first place you confess yourself to be a sinner, one whose character is as completely opposite to the character of God as falsehood to truth, and therefore that you deserve punishment. And, secondly, you recognize God as your Judge, and so virtually admit that the judgment which He passes upon you is perfectly just. Moreover, your whole plea is a sophistical cavil, which leads by direct inference to the abominable maxim, which has been calumniously imputed to us Christians when we are accused of saying, *Let us do evil, that good may come !*

It is only from this passage that we know that Christians in St. Paul's day were charged with such a maxim ; but we can very easily conceive that it may often have been thrown in their teeth by their adversaries on occasion of the controversies about the observance of the law. It is only another form of the doctrine that means may be justified by the end ; and we know that this doctrine very early gained admission into the Church. St. Peter perhaps was the first recorded example of it, in the *dissimulation* for which he was *blamed* by St. Paul at Antioch ; and ecclesiastical history bears witness

by innumerable examples to its continually-increasing prevalence down to the present day. It is not indeed quite easy to draw a clear distinction between some of St. Paul's own proceedings and the dissimulation of St. Peter. But it is, in fact, a universal temptation of human nature. It presented itself to our Lord, and He, perhaps, alone ever gained a complete triumph over it.

The exact meaning of Verse 9 is extremely obscure and doubtful. The Commentators are divided in their opinions as to the true reading, as to the sense of the word which is rendered *Are we better*, as to its connection with the context, and as to the mode of reconciling St. Paul's answer to his own question in this verse with that which he gives apparently to the same question in verse 2. The word rendered, *Are we better*, would, according to its more ordinary sense, be translated, *Have we a plea wherewith to shelter ourselves?* But, on the whole, the sense which harmonizes best with the context, and which, though very rare, is not inadmissible, is that which is given in our translation. But in verse 2 the answer given to the question, *What advantage hath the Jew?* is, *Much every way.* Here the answer to the question, *Are we better than they?* is, *No, in nowise.* This appearance of a direct self-contradiction cannot be removed, as some have proposed, by the substitution of the words, *Not altogether*, or, *Not in every point of view*, which would require the Greek words to be placed in a different order. There is, however, no real contradiction, but only an ambiguity, which raises the appearance of one.

The question, *Are we better?* may be understood in either of two senses, viz., either in the sense, *Have we an outward advantage?* which would be exactly identical with the question in verse 1; or, *Are we inwardly better,—better in the sight of God?* which is a totally different question, and would call for an opposite answer. And this answer St. Paul says he has already given in the former part of his discourse, in which he has charged both Jews and Gentiles with being all under sin, that is, subject to the dominion of sin. And he then proceeds in Verse 10 to confirm this statement by a series of quotations from the Psalms. These quotations, however, are evidently not to be considered in the light of a formal demonstration, for we know nothing either as to their authorship or as to the occasions on which they were composed and the class of persons to which they were addressed; and if we did, large allowance would have to be made for poetical exaggeration and the excitement of personal feelings, so that, strictly speaking, no conclusion could be drawn from them as to the universal sinfulness of mankind. Nor, probably, did St. Paul intend that they should be considered as anything more than an illustration. But at the end, at Verse 19, he brings them home to the Jews by the remark, *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.*

As the quotations are all taken from the Psalms, this proves that by *the law* is meant everything contained in the Old Testament, and not, as otherwise might be supposed, the Thorah, or Penta-

teuch, only.——*Under the law:* subject to its authority, bound by its obligations.——*That every mouth may be stopped.* It is disputed whether the word *that* is to be understood of the design, or only of the actual consequence. From St. Paul's point of view this question would seem to be of little importance. *That every mouth may be stopped:* that is, that every plea in justification or excuse may be silenced.——*And all the world:* Jew as well as Heathen; *may become guilty:* more properly, *may be shewn to be guilty, may be convicted of guilt in the sight of God.*

VERSE 20.—*Therefore,* should be, *because that.* ——*By the deeds of the law:* by that which is done in obedience to the law.——*No flesh:* not simply equivalent to no human being, but with a tacit reference to the weakness of human nature. ——*For by the law is the knowledge of sin:* that is, nothing more than the knowledge of sin. It causes the power of sin to be felt, but does not remove or weaken it.

VERSE 21.—*But now:* the word rendered *now* is not an adverb of time, but signifies, in the present new state of things, brought about by the appearance of Jesus Christ.——*The righteousness of God* (see Chap. i. 17): not God's righteousness, but the righteousness which is of Him, that of which He is the Author.——Instead of *without the law is manifested,* we should read, *has been manifested without the law:* that is, without any co-operation of the law, but yet in perfect conformity to the witness of the law and the prophets, contained in the types, promises, and predictions of the Old Testament.

VERSE 22.—*By faith of Jesus Christ:* it should be, IN *Jesus Christ.*——*Unto all and upon all them that believe: unto all,* designed for all; *and upon all,* actually extending to all *that believe.*

VERSE 23.—*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God:* that is, have missed, lost, forfeited the *glory of God;* the *glory* which God gives by his approbation, by that which, in Chap. ii. 29, is called *the praise, not of men, but of God.*

VERSE 24.—*Being justified freely by his grace.* The participle here is not to be understood as if it was meant to qualify the preceding statement, in the sense of, *and yet justified;* it is simply, while we are justified by his grace: that is, while if we are justified, it is not because we have not forfeited the glory of God, or have any merit of our own to plead, but the justifying grace is conferred freely and gratuitously through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

VERSE 25.—*Whom God hath set forth:* hath (visibly) set forth, has exhibited by his sufferings, death, and resurrection.——*To be a propitiation,* i.e., a means of propitiation.——*Through faith in his blood:* i.e., in the efficacy of his Passion.——*To declare his righteousness,* that is, the righteousness which He has shewn, not, as in our Translation, *for the remission,* but *in the overlooking of sins that are past,* i.e., of the sins for the period antecedent to the appearance of Christ.——*Through the forbearance,* or long-suffering *of God.*

VERSE 26.—*To declare, I say, at this time.* Emphasis is to be laid on the words *at this time,* as

contrasted with the forbearance and long-suffering of the time past, before the coming of Christ (which might have seemed to cast a doubt on his righteousness), and to *shew that He is just*, while *justifying him that believeth in Jesus.*

VERSE 27.—*Where is boasting then?* Where then is there any ground for boasting or self-confidence on the part of the Jews?——*It is excluded. By what law? of works?* (Is it by a law which enjoins works?) *Nay, but by the law of faith.* That is to say, by that law which is not satisfied by any outward acts, but, as the Psalmist says, *requires truth in the inward parts.*

VERSE 28.—*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law:* the meaning would be better expressed, and guarded from dangerous misapprehension if, for *without the deeds of the law*, we read, *and not by the deeds of the law*, which is evidently what St. Paul meant.—— *Without the deeds of the law*, i.e., without the co-operation of *the deeds of the law* as the grounds of his justification.

In Verse 29, where we read, *Is he the God of the Jews only?* the Greek text has, OR *is He the God of the Jews only?* as it would seem must be the case if a man is justified by the deeds of the law, but is evidently untrue, as the God of the Jews is the God of the Gentiles also. And in Verse 30,—*seeing it is one* and the same *God which shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith,*— there is no difference of meaning signified by the prepositions *by* and *through*, as otherwise there must be some difference as to the means of justification

between the circumcision and the uncircumcision, which would be quite irreconcilable with St. Paul's doctrine.

VERSE 31.—*Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid.* It might have seemed that the inevitable inference to be drawn from all that has gone before was to do away altogether with the authority of the law, and this it was of which St. Paul was constantly accused by the Jews, as holding a doctrine which struck at the root of the whole Mosaic system; and therefore St. Paul's answer to his own question must have been considered by his Jewish adversaries as either a shameless falsehood or the wildest of paradoxes.——*Yea, we establish the law.* St. Paul himself has not directly explained in what sense he meant this to be understood, and some have supposed that, having made this startling assertion, he immediately dropped the subject; this, however, is in the highest degree improbable, and the statement seems to be closely connected with the contents of the next Chapter. ——*Through faith:* by transferring our confidence and our boasting, from the law to *faith.* Instead of this we are so far from attempting to invalidate the authority of the law that we uphold, confirm, and establish it.

This would be clear if it could be shewn that the law itself teaches the same doctrine; and this he proceeds to prove by an example which every Jew would admit to be of supreme authority, taken from the history of Abraham.[1] CONNOP THIRLWALL.

[1] Here, I regret to say, the Bishop's Manuscript comes to an end.—EDITOR.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER IV. VERSES 6–16.

VERSE 6.—*By submitting these things* (these predictions and the principles by which the apostacy may be countermined and averted) *to the brethren thou wilt be a good minister* (διάκονος) *of Jesus Christ, nourishing thyself up with the words of the faith and the good instruction which thou hast carefully followed as a disciple.* (Compare Luke i. 3; Mark xvi. 17; 2 Tim. iii. 19.) While this verse referred to the future dangers of the Church, which might be arrested by timely warning and the apprehension of just principles, Timothy was personally warned against a widely-diffused corruption of the simplicity of the Gospel. The supposed evil and defilement of marriage, and the arbitrary sanctity of certain conventional abstinences, might not be proclaimed by open-mouthed apostacy; *but* there were current already many *profane fables, the veriest chatter of old women,* which (says Paul) thou *must avoid.* The speculative myths of the Gnostics of the second century were not in the mind of the writer. We have merely a recurrence to the anile and senseless stories with which the truth of God was being overlaid. Although it is granted that some treasures of thought are discoverable in sundry treatises of the Mishna and apologues of the Gemara, like diamonds in wastes of arid sand, yet Hebrew literature is full of rambling and profitless enlargement of Scripture thought and narrative; and the boast, moreover, made concerning them, is, that they were handed down from

early times. There is, independently of the Pastoral Epistles, historical justification of the statement that Jewish fables may have vexed the common sense and spiritual intelligence of Paul; and while Timothy is warned against them, the Apostle adds: *But exercise thyself:* perform the functions of a gymnast *unto* practical piety or *godliness.* Εὐσέβεια is not a rose-water luxury, and godly energy cannot be fed on sweetmeats and prettinesses. This term, εὐσέβεια, which was commonly understood to mean the whole of man's relation and behaviour to the Divine Being, had been used by St. Paul to express the sum total of human relations with God effected through the mediation of the Incarnate Word. To cultivate these, to give them full sway, involved conflict, daily effort, spiritual gymnastic, and much stirring up of the soul to take hold of God.

In *Verse* 8 the Apostle adds, in confirmation of the previous contrast: *For the training of the body is profitable for a little,* for a few purposes, easily grasped and secured. Considerable difference of opinion has arisen as to the meaning of this "*gymnasia* of the body." Chrysostom, Mack, De Wette, Huther, Alford, and Fairbairn have, with different motives, urged that Paul here refers to physical and athletic exercise, for the purpose of securing health and vigour of body. Some have thus supposed that no sanction, not even the slightest, can be extracted from these words for any semblance of the ascetic physical regimen which had just been condemned as a doctrine of devils and denounced as hypocritical, false, and deadly.

Others, in virtue of the smallness of the advantage here attributed to the ascetic exercise, have been tempted to excise all reference to what is so highly commended by them on other grounds.

This view, however, appears to involve great difficulty. If Paul were supposed to say that "bodily exercise" will originate a slight or temporary advantage to the spiritual life, he makes use of a remark out of harmony with the form of the preceding argument. It is not true, and if it were true it would be utterly irrelevant, to say that bodily exercise is profitable for very little to the physical life or well-being. The view of Calvin, Wiesinger, Heydenreich, Ellicott, and Bengel seems to me to shew the breadth of the Apostle's mind and the ease with which he could discriminate things that differ. He foretells that the Christian Church would be harassed by vexatious, hypocritical, and perilous profanations of holy things, by "doctrines of devils," touching the impurity of marriage and of God's good gifts; but he does not thereby condemn all the existing and current Christian practice of keeping the body in subjection. Certain bodily austerities and a wise self-repression may be justified in the same breath which denounces the morbid and treasonable extremes into which these ascetic ideas might easily run. Physical training has a certain limited advantage which cannot be gainsaid. A man who has learned to moderate his physical desires and artificial needs will have fewer temptations to self-indulgence, and greater capacity of ministering to the necessity of others. But the entire process, which is not

deprived of all sanction from the example of the Apostles and of the Lord Himself, is yet of far less importance than the *godliness* which *is profitable with reference to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come* : *i.e.*, godliness is the pledge, the foretaste, the *earnest* of LIFE in its fullest sense. If *life* be the enjoyment of the conscious favour of God, then even the "life that now is" is deepened, enriched, and hallowed by "godliness." Its bitterness and disappointments, its mysteries, its brevity, and its ending, as well as its pleasures and possibilities, are alike sanctified by godliness. But godliness, as Paul understands it, is the beginning of an endless life, and confers upon us a conscious blessedness which is, in its own nature, incorruptible.

Verse 9 contains the *formula* on which we have already commented more than once. *Faithful is the saying and worthy of every kind of acceptation.* St. Paul himself, or some prophet of the early Church, had given birth to a mighty word which already was passing current as minted coin of the kingdom of heaven. The question arises, whether the "saying" is that which has just been recorded, or whether it refers to that which now follows. Generally the "formula" introduces the "saying;" but if this is the case here, it is still further prefaced by,—

Verse 10.—*For this purpose* [1] (looking or trusting to this) *we both labour unto weariness, and suffer reproach* (and so far the writer must be supposed to justify the gracious fulness of the "saying"), *namely,*

[1] *Cf.*, for construction, Rom. xiv. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 9.

that (ὅτι) *we have put our hope in the Living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who are faithful* or believing.

It seems, however, more consonant with the argument to regard the whole of the verse as a further confirmation of the faithfulness and acceptance of the divine words, "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

The tenth verse, then, will explain and expand the practical nature of *godliness*. Labour and reproach,[1] in combination with this great possession, can be bravely borne with, BECAUSE (ὅτι) *we have put our hope in the Living God.*

The perfect tense (ἠλπίκαμεν) implies a fully confirmed and permanent hope, which began at some period in the past, but is, when uttered, a present experience. The preposition (ἐπὶ, with dative) expresses the resting-place and ground of the hope. (*Cf.* Rom. xv. 12 with Chap. vi. 17.) The predicate, "the Living God," indicates the noble contrast between dead idols, vague abstractions, or dim impersonal powers and tendencies, and the living, loving, personal ground of all our hope, *who is the Saviour of all men.* This is his glorious prerogative: because He has loved all, He has revealed Himself with more or less of adequacy and fulness to *all* men; He has given his law, and He has given his only begotten Son to all; He has not restricted his love to Jews or Pharisees, to the spiritual or

[1] If καὶ is, with Ellicott, Tischendorf, and Tregelles, to be retained before both verbs, the two ideas are regarded as separable, and not necessarily connected elements of life, but as simultaneously presented.

the cultivated, to the elect or to the susceptible, to the good or to the faithful. He has vindicated for Himself this supreme glory against all the prejudices and exclusions of men, just as He has caused the sun to shine on the evil and on the good; but *He* is *specially* more abundantly *the Saviour of believers.*[1] Undoubtedly He is "Saviour" of those who accept his love, who realize his true nature, who are "faithful," loyal to his claims, in a special and more abundant sense than He is to those who never appreciate or respond to his self-manifestation, who cherish grave suspicions of his character and spurn his love. Similarly, God is everywhere, and is actively energizing in every atom of the universe, in every point of time; but he who realizes this stupendous and transcendent fact finds in it moral support as well as continued existence. Such an one enjoys consolation and ecstasy, as well as providential co-operation. It is one thing to live in the dominion of the omnipresent Deity, or even to hold as a dogma that God is everywhere; it is another to cry from the depths of a conscious faith, "Verily, the Lord is in this place; this is none other than the House of God and the Gate of Heaven." The faith-faculty, the energy of spiritual union with God, transforms the universal love of God into a consciousness of salvation.

Verse 11.—*These* foregoing *things utter with authority, and teach.* Timothy had to do two things, to be a channel for this Divine communication, to lay it down with commanding force, to insist upon these principles whether men would hear or forbear;

[1] *Cf.* Acts xxv. 26, xxvi. 3; Gal. vi. 10.

but he was also called upon to *teach* them. Every minister of the Gospel has a message to deliver, indefinitely more impressive than are the speculations of his own fancy, the flowers of his own rhetoric, the persuasions of his own experience; he is also commissioned to teach. By repetition, by illustration, by patient exposition, by a study of the perplexities and prejudices of his hearers, by sympathy, by ready wit, by fecundity of resources and steady persevering toil, he is to *teach* those whom he has summoned to hear his message.

Verse 12.—Such a charge might make Timothy painfully alive to his own youth and inexperience. We have seen in our Introduction to these Epistles[1] that there was sufficient distance in years between the venerable Apostle and his "son Timothy" to render the advice, which is undoubtedly addressed to him, and not to the Church at Ephesus, most pertinent. "*Let no man despise thy youth.*" There is some difficulty in placing the pronoun (σου) in immediate connection with the noun (νεότητος). It is said that the enclitic pronoun is never placed before the noun with which it is associated, unless for the purpose of special emphasis; but Winer has collected some thirty or forty passages in the New Testament where there is no such special emphasis; and here we need none. Timothy was to conduct himself in such a manner that it would be impossible for any onlooker to despise his youth. Childish timidity and pretentious assumption, feeble substitution of his own self-originated ideas in place of God's truth, any forgetfulness of the solemn appeal which God,

[1] THE EXPOSITOR, vol. i. p. 59.

not he, was making to the conscience, any aping of the powers of an apostle, any moral improprieties, any weak paltering with principle, would expose him to despite. Consequently he is warned against such compromise of his position, and the Apostle urges further : "*Be thou a pattern*[1] *of believers, in word, in conversation, in love, in faith, in purity.*

The *words* of the mouth cover a large proportion of the outward manifestation of the inner life. If every "word" uttered by Timothy should be acceptable to God, be true and faithful, be generous and brave, be free from spite, passion, or uncleanness, be seasoned with salt, and be neither vapid, vain, nor "idle;" if in his "word" he should be an ideal Christian, a "pattern of believers," he would all but have satisfied the claims of conscience : but "conversation" includes the whole of his outward bearing; while "love and faith" involve the principles from which right words and holy actions spring. The last term, "purity," includes chastity of mind as well as of body, and is a warning of consummate importance to a young man occupying a prominent position in a city like Ephesus.

Verse 13.—*Until I come* (the form of the expression suggests a strong expectation that Paul would shortly return to Ephesus) *give heed to the reading*, the public reading of God's Word in the Christian assembly. Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Origen, the "Apostolic Constitutions," Chrysostom, and others, alike shew that this exercise formed a most essen-

[1] See Passow, *sub voce*, τύπος. It first means "a blow," then "the mark made by a blow," then "an impression on a seal," then "a copy," "a specimen," "a type," "a pattern." (See 1 Pet. v. 3; Phil. iii. 17; 1 Thess. i. 7.)

tial part of the public worship of the Church. There is no more effective commendation of God's truth than reverent, accurate, intelligent reading of the Word of God in the audience of the people. The custom had been transferred from the synagogue, and credit was given to the New Testament writings by the habit early formed of placing them on the same level as the Sacred Books. (*Cf.* Acts xv.; Col. iv. 16.)

The Apostle adds: *Give heed to the exhortation and to the teaching:* the first term applies possibly to the appeal made to the feelings, the second to the consecutive instruction administered to the understanding by the public teacher. The Church requires to be warned, warmed, roused by an utterance of well-known truth; and, further, it always stands in need of exposition, expansion, illustration, and development of truth.

Verse 14.—*Neglect not the gift*—the charism of the Holy Spirit, the special bestowment of energy, faculty, and organ of service—*that is in thee, which was given thee through prophecy with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery.* The prophetic voice of the Church had been the call of the Holy Spirit to Timothy. Special duties were often thus discovered for individuals in the early Church (*cf.* Acts xiii. 2): and to the present day there is no more vivid assurance and guarantee of the inward monition of the Spirit than this prophetic summons and injunction of the Church of Christ. It was confirmed in the case of Timothy by the imposition of hands on the part of the elders of the Church. Paul may himself have been one of the elders of the Church

who joined in this symbolic act of dedication and prayer. (*Cf.* 2 Tim. i., 5.) This "laying on of hands" is frequently referred to in the New Testament. It was occasionally, though not universally, the symbol of miraculous healing and of the gift of the Holy Spirit to new and previously excluded classes of believers. The Apostles "laid their hands" upon the seven Evangelists. (Acts vi. 6.) This did not, however, confer any power to communicate the Holy Spirit, for we read (Acts viii. 17) that when the Samaritans, from the lips of Philip, received the Gospel, two of the Apostles went down from Judæa to Samaria for the purpose of communicating the Holy Spirit. (*Cf.* Acts xix. 6.) Appointment to ministerial service, or dedication to a missionary career, was also thus expressively attested; but on two remarkable occasions it was not the possession of superior ecclesiastical rank, but the specialty of Divine Providence, which recommended the adoption of this ceremony of decisive confirmation. Thus Ananias (Acts ix. 17) is the means of conferring a grace upon Saul which Philip could not confer on the Samaritans; and "the prophets and teachers" of the Church at Antioch "laid their hands" on Barnabas and Saul and "sent them away" (Acts xiii. 1–3). All the preparation and ordination for the great work of Apollos at Ephesus and Corinth must have been effected by "the brethren" at Ephesus during Paul's absence. It would be difficult, therefore, from these statements to draw forth any definite instructions on the value of the rite as an apostolic method or guarantee of ordination; nor is this the

place to discuss the subsequent adoption of the ceremony by bishops, who thus proceeded to admit catechumens, or *lapsi*, into Church communion. [1]

Verse 15.—*Meditate on*, or practice, *these things.* The interpreters differ as to the precise meaning of the word. The numerous illustrations given by Passow sustain the latter signification in classical Greek. [2] *Be* (engrossed) *in them*; [3] let them be the all-absorbing theme of thy life, the aim and bent of thy whole being, *that thy progress* (in grace or faith) *may be manifest to all.* [4]

Progress is essential to success, and, if made, it ought to be evident, not merely to the conscience of the worker, nor to brethren in office, but " to all."

Verse 16.—*Hold thyself well occupied with* (have thy attention thoroughly absorbed with) *thyself and the teaching* (that is, the culture of thy own life and the function and duties of religious instruction); *continue in them.* Habitual, not fitful and spasmodic, exertion, steady persevering labour will alone meet with the reward of service: *for in doing this thou wilt both save thyself and them that hear thee.*

The salvation of others closely connects itself with that of the preacher's own soul. Nothing brings a man so close to God, reveals his power, his heart, his accessibleness, his glorious welcome of whosoever will come to Him, like the eager per-

[1] See Suicer, " Thesaurus," art. χειροθεσία.

[2] Leo gives *hæc meditare;* so also Heydenreich and Davidson. *Cf.* Psa. ii. 1; Acts iv. 25.

[3] Wettstein quotes Hor. Ep. i.: " Quid verum et decens curo et omnis in hoc sum."

[4] The word προκοπή, from προκόπτω, to cut down wood in the way of an advancing army, is used in this sense by later Greek writers, and it occurs thus in Phil. i. 12, 25.

severing search after the souls of men. If a minister so speaks and lives, so exhorts and teaches, that a multitude believe unto life eternal, he quickens his own faith and enters into the joy of his Lord. Notwithstanding all the dire temptations to deal with the mysteries of Divine Love in a professional and perfunctory spirit, yet no man with deep human sympathy and humility can absorb himself in these things and "continue in them," without being ready to admit his infinite indebtedness to the very calling itself. Thousands would allow that if they had not thus cared for others they might have lost their own souls.

H. R. REYNOLDS.

NOTES ON COMMENTARIES.

I REGRET to withdraw even a few pages of THE EXPOSITOR from the proper work of the Magazine,—that of expounding and illustrating Holy Scripture. But as I am often and urgently pressed to point out the Commentaries most likely to be useful to students of the Bible; as, moreover, I have promised [1] to indicate "the Commentaries which I myself have most constantly in use," and especially those—since these are most in demand—which the unlearned student of Scripture will find to be most helpful to him, I proceed very briefly to place the results of my experience at the disposal of my brethren. I must beg them to bear in mind, however, first, that I am about to speak only of books which I have had, or have, in constant use; and, secondly, that my library is necessarily a small one, and that for many years I have had no access to the well-stored shelves of such libraries as may be found in London or in the University towns: [2] so that my suggestions will have little value except for students of the humbler grades.

At the very outset I would warn the inexperienced student, especially if his books must needs be few, against any Commentary which professes to treat of the whole Bible, if at least it be written

[1] THE EXPOSITOR, vol. ii. p. 71.

[2] I think I have never gone so near to coveting my neighbours' goods as when I have stood in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.

throughout by one and the same pen. Such Commentaries as those of Scott and Matthew Henry—once much in vogue—are simply worthless for purposes of serious study, though they may be very suitable, as Matthew Henry's commonly is, for devotional reading. No one man, however gifted, or learned, or devout, is capable of expounding the long series of books of which The Book consists. The best Commentaries are those written by men who have devoted the best years of their life to the study and exposition of a single Scripture, or of a limited portion of Scripture: others may be very useful, but none save these are of the first quality. Nor will *the student* find much help, if any, in popular manuals like those of Barnes. They will not only mislead him on points on which much labour, delicate scholarship, and profound spiritual insight are required; but they will also vitiate and deprave his very conception of what exposition may and ought to be.

Some Commentary which includes the whole Bible is indispensable, however, if only because on many Scriptures expositions of the highest kind are not to be had; and when expositions of the best and highest kind are out of reach, almost any scholarly exposition is better than none: the traditional interpretations may be learned from it at least, and what to avoid, if not what to imitate and pursue. And of such Commentaries I know of none more helpful, on the whole, for the student who is familiar with no language but his own than *Lange's* "Bible-work," an American translation of which is now being issued—most of the volumes have appeared—by Messrs. Clark of Edinburgh; and, for the student who has a decent acquaintance with Hebrew and Greek, the Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament of *Keil* and *Delitzsch,* an English translation of which is published by the same Firm; supplemented by *Meyer's* Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, a translation of which the same Firm has recently taken in hand. Of course, as these Commentaries contain the work of men of very different gifts and degrees of power, only long and intimate acquaintance with them will reveal where they are, and where they are not, of real value to the careful student. Unequal they must be, and at times the inequality is startlingly abrupt: as, for example, in Lange's "Bible-work," where a weak and jejune exposition of the Book of Joshua is immediately followed by a singularly fresh and masterly exposition of the Book of Judges.

A serious disadvantage in Lange's Commentaries, to the student who wishes to reach "the mind of the Spirit" and has but scanty leisure for mastering the true meaning and intention of Scripture, is the verbose style in which they are for the most part written, and the immense mass of doctrinal and ethical, homiletical and practical deductions with which the critical and exegetical suggestions are overlaid. Nevertheless there is much good matter in them, which, if the sieve be used vigorously,—as it generally needs to be with German Biblical literature,—may easily be riddled out; though now and then, remembering how much has been put into the sieve, one wonders a little to see how little is left. *Keil* is always sober, judicious, scholarly, if a little dull. *Delitzsch* combines with unusual learning a great gift of spiritual insight; and, though his work varies much in quality, he can hardly ever be consulted in vain. *Meyer's* work is so good that, to a surprising degree, it has already been absorbed and given out in new forms by our best English Commentators: it would be difficult to name any Commentary on the whole New Testament which is of such even and high exegetical value throughout.

If the student has provided himself with one or other of, or, better still, with both, these Commentaries on the whole Bible, he will then have to select those expositions of the several Scriptures which should be the main and constant instruments of his work. And here the real difficulty begins; for, owing to the immense advance in all departments of Biblical learning which has taken place during the last two or three decades even, the most valuable Commentaries for his purpose are those which have been recently written: and though there is no lack of modern expositions, there is often grave lack in them. The best books in any branch of literature are not numerous; and in the *English* branch of Biblical exegesis and exposition there are but few which competent judges would place in the first class, though there are happily a considerable number which stand high in the second class. Of such Commentaries these are those which I value most, and which I would advise the student to get at all costs:—Dr. Kalisch on the Pentateuch, Canon Cook on Job, Canon Perowne on the Psalms, Professor Plumptre on Proverbs, Dr. Morison on St. Matthew and St. Mark, Dr. Godet on St. Luke, Lewin on the Life and Epistles of St. Paul, and, before and above all, Canon Lightfoot on Galatians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. I do not mean to hint either that there are no other English Commentaries worthy to be

ranked with these, or that these are all of the same order of merit; all I mean is, that, while I could find a substitute for most other English Commentaries which would serve my turn almost equally well, I should be puzzled to find substitutes for any one of these, and therefore would never willingly be without them.

On the *Pentateuch* no English book that I know is of equal value to the student with the work of Dr. Kalisch.[1] It is published in two forms: one, designed for purely English readers; the other, for students acquainted with Hebrew. Written in slightly ornate English, with a somewhat too obvious strain after eloquence, it is learned, scientific, sceptical. But despite its scepticism, and the Jewish anti-Christian tone which one detects in it now and then, no sincere and devout student of the Bible should be without it. In his exposition Dr. Kalisch shirks no difficulty; while the Introductions, and the dissertations on points of grave moment, are singularly able and elaborate. As yet it extends only to the end of Leviticus; but Numbers and Deuteronomy are shortly to appear.

On *Genesis* both Keil and Lange may be consulted with advantage; as may also, for Introduction, &c., two papers by the Dean of Canterbury, which appeared in the "Bible Educator," and which deal with the "documentary hypothesis" in the most admirably brief and convincing manner; so, too, may the Introduction and Exposition contributed by the Bishop of Winchester to the "Speaker's Commentary."

And as I here for the first time mention the "Speaker's Commentary,"[2]—I could not include it among Commentaries on the whole Bible, by various hands, both because too little of it has yet been given to the public, and even that part of it already published has too recently come into my use,—it may be permitted me to say that, in my judgment, the Critics have done but scant justice to this important work. No doubt it is marked by many of the defects they have pointed out,—defects common to all joint-work and to every attempt to comment on the whole Bible. But every book, it is admitted, should be judged by its avowed purpose and aims. And a Commentary designed for the instruction of "men of ordinary culture" must of necessity omit much that men of more than ordinary culture would find instruc-

[1] "Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament, with a New Translation." By M. M. Kalisch, Phil. Doc., M.A. London: Longmans.

[2] "The Holy Bible, with an Explanatory and Critical Commentary, and a Revision of the Authorized Translation." By Bishops and other Clergy of the Anglican Church. Edited by Canon Cook. London: John Murray

tive. A Commentary intended for the average English reader must, also of necessity, be brief and compressed, and leave but little scope for the discussion of disputed and critical points. And a Commentary written "by bishops and other clergy of the Anglican Church," for the instruction of the members of that Church, is surely not to be blamed because it is conceived and written throughout from the orthodox point of view. I have found this work, I confess, not only what it professed to be, but, its design and method considered, much better than I thought it could be. Like all books which embrace the whole series of the Sacred Scriptures and are written by men of various gifts and different calibre, it varies greatly in value, the Commentators on most of the historical books of the Old Testament shewing to little advantage, for example; but, none the less, "men of ordinary culture" may certainly learn much from its weakest parts; while some parts—as, for instance, Canon Cook on Job, Professor Plumptre on Proverbs, and Dr. Payne Smith on Jeremiah are among the happiest specimens of popular exposition I have met. Indeed, all the learned Editor's work is so good that, had this adventure done nothing more than make his power as a Commentator generally known, it would have been worth the pains it has cost.

On *Exodus* I would recommend the student to study Kalisch first; then, for Chaps. i.–xix., Canon Cook (in the "Speaker's Commentary"); then Keil and Lange.

On *Leviticus* I know of nothing accessible to the English student of the first quality except Kalisch, which always needs to be read with care and watchfulness; on *Numbers*, *Deuteronomy*, and *Joshua*, nothing at all: these are among the instances in which one has to fall back on the Commentaries that cover the whole Bible. But on *Judges* there is a very fresh and lively, yet learned and sympathetic, exposition in Lange's "Bible-work," by Professor Steenstra. Of *Ruth* an exposition has appeared in the pages of this Magazine.

Of good English Commentaries on the *historical* Books of the Old Testament, indeed—on the Books of *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Esther*, no less than on *Joshua* and *Judges*—it must be sorrowfully confessed that we are strangely destitute. It would be but natural to expect that these ancient historic documents, unparalleled in the literature of any other nation, appealing so directly to the popular imagination and heart, and

fraught with political and moral lessons of the gravest interest to a patriotic race like our own, would have engaged, even in an excessive measure, the attention of our best scholars and expositors. But of adequate English Commentaries on them, or even of English translations of such Commentaries, there are, so far as I know, absolutely none. Dean Stanley's "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church" do something, indeed, to give the general reader the right point of view, to make him feel both that the men who pass before us in the glass of the Word are men of like passions with ourselves, and that God was ever more and more fully revealing his mind and will to them as the ages ran by. Ewald's "History of Israel"—of which a spirited translation has been recently published by Longmans—does far more to trace out the continuous story of the elect race, and to throw light both on its connection with the general history of the ancient world and on the sacred documents in which it is recorded. But Ewald, with all his learning and genius, is capricious, self-willed, arbitrary to a fault; his work is everywhere marred by those false principles of historical and literary criticism—"the *higher* criticism" as it gives itself out to be—to which, though he had deliberately adopted them, he was never consistently true. And, moreover, neither Ewald nor Stanley offer us that of which we are in search—a Commentary, and a Commentary addressed to readers of only ordinary cultivation and intelligence. That such Commentaries on the historical books are eagerly desired, the want of them keenly felt, I have some reason to know. From more than one manse in Scotland I have lately received letters, begging me to procure an able and popular exposition of these books for the pages of THE EXPOSITOR, assuring me that, should I do so, I should make it "the most popular magazine in England." *Dubito:* that is a pinnacle not easily reached. But there can be no doubt that such an exposition is urgently demanded. All I can say to those who have earnestly inquired where, among English books, they could find some Commentary likely to assist them in preparing lectures on the Old Testament histories, is that, for the present, they must be content with such help as they can get from the "Speaker's Commentary"—here at its weakest—from Lange, and from Keil.

EDITOR.

THE EXPOSITOR.

I. *SAMUEL*
AND THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS.

WITHIN the last few years there has been among students of the Bible a growing appreciation of the greatness of Samuel's character and of the unique position which he holds in the history of God's chosen people. In old time readers were content to see in him chiefly an example of early piety. This he is to us still; but the more exact and minute study of the Scriptures, inaugurated in Germany early in the present century, leaves the actors in the sacred drama no longer enveloped in the dim halo of general reverence with which our piety enshrouds them. One by one they step forth into clearer light, and we learn to recognize their personal characteristics and to estimate the exact part which they played in the development of Israel's history, and the influence, for good or for evil, which they exerted upon the fortunes of their country. The grandeur of the character of Moses had rendered it impossible to forget that he was a hero and a statesman, a poet and a historian, as well as a legislator and a prophet; but the more brief records of Samuel's history, and the humility with which his personal services are kept in

the background, had prevented men from appreciating the fact that he was the second founder of Israel's greatness. Nor was it merely the political institutions of his country which he placed upon a sounder and more lasting basis; he gave it also intellectual life. The schools of the prophets rapidly raised Israel to a height of culture, regarded by neighbouring nations with such wonder, that the name and court of Solomon are to this day looked upon in the East as the symbols of more than human knowledge. And they wrought also for higher ends. The religious institutions of Moses had never possessed more than a superficial hold of the people till Samuel's time. It was the men trained in Samuel's schools who completed the work which Moses had begun, and gave life and energy to the principles of the Theocracy and to the legislative enactments in which those principles were embodied.

I purpose, therefore, before giving a minute description of this portion of Samuel's work, to cast a general glance at the state of things which existed politically, socially, and morally at the time when God raised him up for the renovation of Israel. His youth apparently was spent in a period of comparative prosperity for his country. At the commencement of the Book of Samuel we find the supreme power no longer held by one of those impromptu warriors, raised up from time to time by the Divine Providence, to maintain Israel's independence, and subsequently called to the helm of the State by the popular voice. Though men like Gideon may have possessed political aptitudes, as a rule the Judges were soldiers chiefly, fit to act in times of emergency;

but when the danger had passed away they retained probably but little authority except in their own district; and the tribes were governed by their local chieftains and the heads of the great houses. Samson, the last of these judges, was of all the least fitted by nature for the cares of government. His life was a series of acts of personal and individual prowess, by which he warded off for a time the growing danger of his country, then threatened with utter subjugation by the Philistines; but even to resist their encroachments we never find him uniting the people for a collective effort, nor shewing any of that constructive power in which lies the secret of a statesman's lasting success.

Yet he did accomplish much. His strength and energy, his ready wit, his joyous spirits in the presence of terrific dangers, his hardihood and self-confidence, all combined to make him a popular hero and to invest the struggle with the Philistines with a poetic interest. As men well understand now, the imagination plays a far vaster part in the formation of a nation, in its elevation to greatness, and in the maintenance by it of its rights and liberties, than was supposed in the prosaic commencement of this century, before we had seen how much a nation can and will do for an idea. And to this ennobling part of man's nature the feats of Samson appealed, and the contest with the Philistines — then growing daily in intensity, and which, till the times of David was a struggle not for supremacy merely, but for national existence — was carried on with higher courage and stronger hope because associated with many a tale of the merry-hearted and thoughtless Nazarite, whose

lot it was ever to be taken unawares, but always, with lightsome spirit and hardy vigour, to hurl back destruction on his foe, till at last he broke his vow and his strength departed from him.

He passes away, and we have a long break in Israel's history. When the narrative begins again we find ourselves in quite a different state of things. The office of judge is now united with that of high priest; but Eli, the high priest, is of the family of Ithamar, and though his grandson, Ahiah, and his great-grandson, Abiathar, inherited the priestly office, it quickly reverted, in the person of Zadok, to the line of Eleazar; and so contemptuously was the line of Ithamar regarded by the Jews that no genealogy of its chiefs is to be found in the Books of Chronicles. In spite of their services in David's days, and of their fearful sufferings in his cause at Nob, they seem to be treated like a proscribed race. What are we, then, to imagine? Was Eli a usurper, who had deposed the elder line from the priesthood? We think not. There is not a word in the denunciation of ruin upon Eli's house (1 Sam. iii. 11–14) which suggests any other reason for its fall than the iniquity of Eli's sons. His own character is always represented to us as that of a good and holy man.

Still it is not probable that he inherited the priesthood, and the judgeship was of the nature of an elective office, to which some hero was called by the national voice. He could have attained to his high rank only by his own personal merits; and just as afterwards the priestly office seems to have been combined by Samuel, though only a Levite, with

that of judge, so, probably, when Eli had become judge the high priesthood also came to him, upon some vacancy, as part of his general supremacy. As a descendant of Aaron he had the necessary qualification of priestly birth, and his foremost place in the national esteem made it impossible for any member of the elder line to compete with him. But the state of things disclosed in the narrative makes us feel sure that Eli won his power by political qualities. When the Book of Samuel opens, everything is quiet and peaceful. The people are reposing under the shelter of a vigorous ruler; and if danger is looming in the remote distance, it is because power and license have corrupted his sons. At Shiloh, in the leading tribe of Ephraim, where the Tabernacle had been set up by Joshua, Eli had evidently been long dwelling in safety, and the people came there from time to time in full security, both to take part in the holy rites of religion and to bring their suits before him as their civil ruler.

But as he advanced in years his power fell into unworthy hands. Not only did his sons not inherit his high mental qualities, but they were bad and unholy men. And far more depended then upon the personal qualities of the ruler than is the case now. There was none then of that apparatus of government which now will go on mechanically for a long time; all depended upon the force of will and character possessed by the ruler. Eli, it seems, had been careless in the training of his sons. Apparently he had married late in life; for his eldest grandchild Ahiah was but two or three years old when Eli died, at the age of ninety-eight. And

occupied with the cares of government, and with all an old man's fondness for the children of his old age, he restrained them not, but let them run wild in youthful riot and excess. And so, when they had grown to man's estate, and the strong arm of the father had become weak with increasing years, all things changed for the worse. Idolatry raised its head again, and with it discontent and disaffection spread throughout the land. The Philistines, ever on the watch, saw their opportunity, and gathered themselves together to take advantage of Israel's decay; and Eli's long reign ended in bitter disaster.

Yet even here we see proofs of his previous greatness. He had so welded the nation together that it gathers as a whole to repel the Philistine attack. It is no question of desultory efforts, such as Samson had made, but an army in regular order goes forth to the battle. It is defeated, and about four thousand men are slain (1 Sam iv. 2). But even then we find nothing of that helpless feeling which had made the men of Judah reproach Samson for prolonging the struggle with the foe. They had said to him, "Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?" (Judges xv. 11). Now the feeling is one of surprise at their defeat. It was something new, and they ask: "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?" (1 Sam. iv. 3.) There must have been many a successful campaign in Eli's earlier days before he could have changed the temper of the people so thoroughly.

But now Israel fell. Dragging the Ark with them to the war, to raise their flagging spirits in the coming struggle, they contended with the Philistines afresh.

The combat was long and fierce; and we read that the Philistines fought, not as men used to victory, but as those who felt that their lot might be bondage to Israel, and Israel fought as men with memories full of deeds of ancient valour. But finally the Philistines prevailed. There fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen, the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli slain.

At this time Samuel was about twenty years of age, and probably had not gone in person to the war, but remained at Shiloh, as a minister of the sanctuary. And when the news of the national disaster reached him there, apparently it was owing to his zeal and diligence that the Tabernacle, with the sacred furniture and records, were all preserved. How he removed them from Shiloh we do not know; but after so severe a battle, the enemy would move but slowly. Very possibly it was in a subsequent campaign that Shiloh was utterly destroyed, with such barbarous thoroughness that it never again became one of the religious sanctuaries of the nation, but was regarded with a shudder of horror by the people for successive generations (Jer. xxvi. 9,) and its name never heard without pain.

In this terrible crisis of the nation Samuel became its deliverer. The death of Eli's sons had left no one round whom the people could gather, and for a long time the Philistines pushed their advantage to the utmost. Parts of the country they entirely subdued (1 Sam. vii. 14); the rest they compelled to pay tribute. At the beginning of Saul's reign we read that the disarmament of Israel had been so complete that they had not even been permitted

to retain such tools as were used in the armourer's trade (Chap. xiii. 19); swords were rarities found only in the hands of princes like Saul and Jonathan (*ib.* 22); and the Philistines had even garrisons in such positions as left the entire country at their mercy (Chap. xiv. 1).

Now Samuel does not appear to have been a great warrior. His arms were not those of physical force, but of justice and piety. And as the overthrow of Eli's house and the disastrous issue of his reign had been caused by the spread of that moral corruption of which his sons had set the example, so it was by working a reformation among the people that Samuel raised the nation again to comparative independence. But it was a slow process. For twenty years the people groaned beneath the yoke of Philistine oppression; gradually, nevertheless, the teaching and example of Samuel wrought upon their consciences, and at length the time had come when they on their part were ready to abjure their idols, and return by an act of national repentance to Jehovah; and Samuel was ready on his part to face the political consequences of what the Philistines would regard as an act of rebellion.

At Mizpah, in the tribe of Benjamin, not far from Jerusalem, the national convocation was held, and after twenty years of death Israel revived again. It was a sad and tearful meeting, and as Samuel pleaded with the people, and shewed them that their misery was the result of their sins, they determined with unanimous consent to put away their idols and to cleave wholly to the Lord. And as they fasted and poured out water upon the ground, the

mutterings of distant warfare began to be heard. The Philistines were gathering their hosts to punish their refractory subjects; and Israel, unarmed, broken in spirit by long bondage, and unused to war, trembled at the sound. But they remained stedfast to abide the issue. Gradually, by slow degrees, Samuel had won their confidence; but it was his piety and religious character which had made them trust him. They urge him to pray for them incessantly, and so, spending their days in the same spirit as that in which the Scots prepared for Bannockburn, they awaited in fear the issue. We are not to suppose that Samuel had neglected his duties as a general. Doubtless he had posted the Israelites in a strong position, had armed and drilled them as well as he could, and prepared them for the attack. Nor were the Philistines neglectful on their side. When we read that their "lords went up against Israel" (1 Sam. vii. 7), we are to understand by it that the whole confederacy, united in common council, had marshalled their forces to crush, by a combined effort, the sturdy peasants who dared to strike again for freedom. And so, it may be, some weeks were spent in preparing for the fight; and well did Samuel know how to employ them. At last the Philistine host appears in sight. Samuel, at once the priest and the general of the revolters, offers a lamb as a whole burnt offering, and pours forth earnest prayers to God. As the flames mount heavenward the Philistines rush forward to the attack. But a tempest gathers, and a crash of mighty thunderings breaks forth over their heads. Panic-stricken they hesitate: it seems as if the voice of God forbade their advance.

To Israel the thunder was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, the token that Samuel's prayers were heard; and as he gives the signal for the onset, they dash forward. Armed only with clubs and stones and the implements of agriculture, their exulting spirits gave them an easy victory over the foe, and Israel recognized in Samuel the hero whose prayers had given them the victory. By general acclaim Samuel became Israel's judge, and the land had rest all his days.

Of the way in which he judged Israel we have but one general record, which shews, however, the conscientious manner in which he discharged his civil duties. Once in each year he went on circuit, not indeed through a large extent of country, but through the chief cities of Benjamin (1 Sam. vii. 16). The other tribes probably were governed by their local chiefs, but with a general acknowledgment of Samuel's supremacy; for when, in Chap. viii., after the lapse of a lengthened period, the history is resumed, we find the elders of all Israel assembled unto him, urging him to choose one who should reign over the whole nation and unite its disjointed energies into a firm and compact mass.

The reason given was the degeneracy of Samuel's sons. If not licentious, like the sons of Eli, they were corrupt and avaricious, and perverted judgment for bribes. Now, probably, Samuel had noticed this long before. Naturally he had looked to his sons to aid him in his duties, and had been disappointed. Probably, also, he had felt the responsibilities of his office weigh heavily upon him, and, with that conscientiousness which had made him go in person

from place to place to determine the lawsuits of the people, he looked round for aid from others. But where was he to find such aid? Up to this time the safety and progress of Israel had depended upon irregular and spasmodic efforts; but ever when needed most the champion had arisen whom the exigencies of the time required. But at the death of each of these brave soldiers all lapsed back into its old chaotic state. With Samuel this anarchy and confusion ended; and one of his noblest and most important efforts for the public good was the institution of the schools of the prophets. With them a new era dawned upon Israel, and never again did the people fall back into the state of lawless turbulence which had prevailed during the centuries which followed immediately upon their settlement in the land of Canaan.

In my next paper I propose to gather together the scattered notices of these schools which are to be found in the Scriptures, in the hope of presenting such a complete view of them as may enable the reader to form an accurate idea of their general nature and of the great influence which they exerted upon the national progress. The notices are indeed brief, and leave much to be desired, but when combined together will be found far more numerous than a casual reader might suppose, and will suffice to give us a competent idea of the very important place which they held in Israel's internal history and in the gradual bestowal of that revealed truth which it was Israel's high office first to attain to itself and then to bestow upon the Gentile world.

R. PAYNE SMITH.

SPIRITUAL FORCES.

ST. MATT. xi. 12.

THE kingdom of heaven is immaterial, impalpable, spiritual; how, then, can it be touched by violence or force? Nay, this kingdom being the kingdom of heaven, having, therefore, a Divine purity and majesty, how shall any man dare to assail and force it? Of this kingdom, if of anything, we may surely say,—

> "We do it wrong, being so majestical,
> To offer it the show of violence;
> For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
> And our vain blows malicious mockery."

Yet, in the verse before us, our Lord describes it as suffering violence, and seems to approve of those who take it by force: nay, more, He implies that *only* as we are violent, and use force, can we enter the kingdom of heaven.

But perhaps our English Version does not accurately render the original Greek?

It does not; nor is it easy, if it be possible, to give an accurate translation of our Lord's words. Perhaps the exactest rendering of them would be this: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven *is energised, and the energetic seize it by force;*" or this: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven *puts forth force, and men of force strongly lay hold upon it.*" And each of these translations asserts both that the kingdom of heaven, although it is spiritual and impalpable, uses force, and that it suffers force, despite its inherent majesty.

How, then, are we to understand such words as these? In what sense did the kingdom of heaven, from the coming of the Baptist, begin to use force? and in what sense did those who followed John and Jesus lay hold upon it with a force amounting to violence? The answer to these questions is to be found in the spiritual history of that period; in the new marvellous development of spiritual truth and life which then took place, and in the new and more earnest spirit which alone prepared men to welcome that development and to profit by it.

1. Under the term "kingdom of heaven" we include all manifestations of the Divine Truth and Love made to men, all disclosures of the Divine Will, whether these disclosures took the form of law or grace, of warning or invitation; and all "administrations" of the Divine Spirit, whether these "administrations" took the form of special gifts — as prophecies, miracles, psalms, or the more common and the more valuable gifts of strength to resist evil, to follow after holiness, to order the life in the fear and love of God. In short, all that we now mean by such terms as "religion" and the "religious life" was, and is, the kingdom of heaven on the earth. Obviously, therefore, there has *always* been a kingdom of heaven among men; to some extent, in some sense, there has always been a kingdom of heaven in *every* man. Among the Heathen, the recognition of the Divine Existence and Will, the sense of right and wrong, the love and approbation of virtue, the foreboding of evil when the inward law was broken, the faint intermittent hope of a happy future as the reward of a virtuous life—these, and the like intui-

tions and convictions, were their kingdom of heaven, their spiritual realm and possession ; from this they drew the motive and inspiration of all that was truest in them and best. Among the Jews this heavenly kingdom, this spiritual realm, was larger, its foundations were more strongly laid, its laws more distinctly and more authoritatively pronounced. They knew God, and God's word, and God's will, far more clearly, and their present duty, and, at least in the later stages of their history, the hope of a future life. They were not left to the discoveries and deductions of reason, nor to the dictates of an imperfect and varying moral sense ; they were taught by holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But when John the Baptist came, preaching repentance and faith, and, still more, when the Lord Jesus came, preaching salvation from every form and taint of evil, this kingdom of heaven was *energized ;* that is, all its elements and constituents were quickened into a more intense activity ; it put forth new and unprecedented force ; it revealed God, and man's duty to God, the life man might live and the immortality to which he might aspire, with a precision and an authority before unknown : it compelled men to make a more decisive choice between earth and heaven, between God's will and their own will, between the glaring shows of time and the softened splendours of eternity. The heavenly kingdom, heretofore restrained by the local laws and national ceremonies in which it was expressed, burst from its restraints, appealed to the universal conscience of humanity, and proclaimed a salvation for men of every blood and every class.

The scene is so remote from us, and the Lord Jesus bore Himself with a composure so meek and invariable, that we too often forget, or fail to realize, the amazing energy, the tremendous force, which must have been latent in Him—in his life, in his word—in order that it might change and raise the whole life of man, that it might lift the whole world nearer heaven. But, so soon as we think of it, we know and feel that the kingdom of God must indeed have been strongly energized, that it must have put forth an intense and divine activity, before it could have conquered and absorbed all the kingdoms of the earth.

We know very well how hard, for the most part, men are to move; how stiff in their habits, how sordid in their aims, how insensible to motives drawn from the unseen and the future. What upward movement in our own time can we remember which has not cost a vast and continuous expenditure of human energy? If, for example, a man gifted above his fellows sees some political truth more clearly than they do, and sets himself to secure free trade, or to educate the people, what years of toil it costs him before his thought wins the adhesion even of the intelligent! How many years of toil must *they* wear through before they can get their scheme espoused by the public and formulated into a law! How the truth they hold must be "energized," into what an infinite variety of forms must it be thrown, what endless objections must it be strong enough and patient enough to subdue, with what "force" must it tell for good in any small experiment that may be adventured, before it can hope t<

establish itself in the convictions and affections of men! When, for example, a Luther finds forgotten truths in a neglected Bible and devotes himself to the promulgation of these truths, his whole life becomes a labour, an agony of conflict against the base interests of the clerical caste and its adherents, nay, against the prejudices and habits of a continent. If he is to conquer, must not his truths be of a sovereign potency? must they not put forth all their energy? must they not have infused into them a divine strength, a patient unweariable force, which will sap every form of opposition, seize on every point of vantage, and know how to turn foes into friends and convert defeat into victory?

And when any such revolution in the thoughts and affections of men is on foot, who are those that, first, yield to it, and, then, further it? Surely it is the "men of force;" the men who have most of the champion and martyr spirit; men of so intense and active a temperament that they can make that which is unseen real and present to their minds; men of an ardour which enables them to break through the bonds of habit, to risk and, if need be, to sacrifice their private interests for the public good. *These* are they who strongly, or even violently, seize upon the new thought, the new truth, the new religious faith, and are ready to count all things but loss so that they may win it for themselves and give it to their neighbours.

Strangely, then, as this verse may sound when we first read it, it grows clear as we think about it; we understand that whenever the kingdom of heaven is energized, it is the energetic who will seize upon it

by force and gradually impose it on the world; we understand that whenever God reveals new truth, or, rather, old truth in new forms, and puts an unwonted force into it, it is the "men of force"—the men of active, earnest, intense nature—who will be the first to run the risk of receiving it, the first to make the sacrifice of breaking away from that which is old in order to espouse and advocate that which is new. So soon as we apply this general rule to the case before us, all obscurity disappears from our Lord's words. When He manifested Himself to Israel, the kingdom of heaven was *energized*. There was a sudden development, a forcible and marvellous outburst of pent-up powers. All that was highest, purest, divinest in the law of Moses and the worship of the Temple was expressed in and by Him, but expressed in simpler, nobler, and more universal forms — in forms which made them the property of the whole world instead of the patrimony of a single race.

Take one or two illustrations of the new force, or energy, which was thus infused into the kingdom of heaven. By their very separation from other races, the Jews bore witness to the holiness of God, testified that moral purity was a law of his kingdom. But Christ, simply because He was really, and not formally, pure; because He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, could mingle with sinners, instead of standing aloof from them, and make holiness inviting to them, and welcome the sinners of all ages and lands, not to his feet only, but to his heart. The Jews were taught to hold God for their Lord and Friend, because they served Him

and kept his commandments; but, in Christ, God revealed Himself as the tender forgiving Father even of the unloving and disobedient, as caring for the prodigal and erring children who had alienated themselves from Him, and as not simply longing for their return to Him, but as sacrificing what He loved best that they might return. The Jews were taught to trust in the mercy of God, to believe that He would forgive their sins if they expressed their sorrow for sin in the sacrifices He had appointed for them; but in Christ the mercy of God was disclosed, not as willing to forgive a man, or a nation, for the sake of the sacrifices they offered, but as itself making a sacrifice, as constraining Him to sacrifice *Himself*, in order to take away the sin of the whole world.

Now it needs no argument to prove that, by thus extending and fulfilling the Hebrew law, Christ poured into it a flood of spiritual and redeeming force which made it virtually a new revelation; we see at once that by his advent and teaching, his life and cross, the kingdom of heaven was energized, transformed, glorified.

And this new force in the kingdom called for new force in the men who would enter it; this new spirit in the revelation of God demanded a new heart and a new spirit in its recipients. No indolent or merely formal acquiescence, no mere observance of certain religious customs and ordinances, no idle repetition of creeds and prayers, would any longer suffice. The new Faith demanded a new and corresponding type of religious character. And this type was found both in John and in Jesus. Different as they

were in much, they had this in common—a perfect devotion to the truth. *They* did not waver and hang in poise between the world and God. They did not seek to condone moral defects by zeal for forms of belief or worship. They did not give nine-tenths of their time and energy to making a fortune or making a name, and the other tenth to the service of God and man. They did not trim between the favour of the Divine King and the favour of priests and princes. They loved God with all their heart and soul and strength. They consecrated their whole life to the proclamation and obedience of truth and righteousness. They put their hands to a plough from which they did not look back.

And their followers were of a kindred spirit. They esteemed the reproach of Christ above all the riches of the world. That they might know and serve the truth, they left all that they had,—home and synagogue, wives and children, the respect of their neighbours and the goodwill of rabbi and priest. With neither scrip nor purse, they followed One who had not where to lay his head—followed Him whithersoever He went, followed Him, through life, to death. They were emphatically "men of force," men of supreme spiritual energy; and when Christ came and put a new force into the kingdom of heaven, these men of force responded to his call; the kingdom was energized, and they seized upon it with a sacred violence, and clung to it at the loss of all they once held dear; all that they had heretofore most gloried in, they did now count but dross that they might win Christ and be found in Him.

2. "*From the time of John the Baptist until now,*" says the Lord, "this was the law of the heavenly kingdom; it came with force, and it required a certain force of character to lay hold upon it." Is that law repealed, then? does it no longer bind men, or does it still run and hold? Has the kingdom of heaven lost, or abated, its energy? Have we fallen back to the level of the Jews, so that we may account ourselves citizens of the heavenly kingdom if only we lightly acquiesce in the truth Christ taught, if we recite the Christian creed and prayers, if we observe the forms of Christian worship? Or is the truth of Christ still vital, and the life of Christ still a sovereign and supreme energy in the world, demanding a hearty and energetic reception at our hands?

Let our own experience furnish a reply. It is very true that most of us are familiar with the elements of Divine truth from our very childhood, and that our minds and our habits are, in some good measure, insensibly formed by them as we rise in years. Even the world around us is largely dominated by Christian principle—as we may see if we compare our social conditions with those of ancient Greece and Rome—and imposes some wholesome restraints upon us, supplies us with some motives to virtue and purity. And our homes are, for the most part, far more distinctively Christian than the general world around us; in our domestic intercourse we constantly receive some pious impressions, not simply from the words we hear, but from the kindness, the patience, the horror of evil, the devotion and self-sacrifice we see in those whom we love. It

may well be, therefore, that we have grown up unconsciously into religious habits of thought and conduct; that, though we trust we have a sincere and cordial faith in Christ, we can point to no great interior change, to no sudden and overwhelming moment of conversion: and hence we may be apt to say, "No, the kingdom of heaven has never come to us with force; we have never violently seized hold upon it."

But before we witness this sad confession, let us consider ourselves somewhat more closely. For though we can point to no sudden sweeping change, though the renewing force may have come upon us so gradually as to be well-nigh imperceptible, yet if our heart and life be truly, though imperfectly, Christian,—must not some great force have been at work within us, to lift us above the lures of the senses, above the customs and habitual sins of a worldly and selfish life? If in character and conduct we can fairly meet the Christian tests, if we love God more than man, and truth more than gain, and duty more than pleasure; if we are sincerely endeavouring to correct the defects of our nature, to bring all its faculties and affections under law to Christ; if our faith makes the unseen visible to us, and brings the distant future into the present, so that during these fleeting hours of time we are acting on motives drawn from eternity: if, in short, we are Christian in more than name, is it, can it be, anything short of a Divine energy by which we have been thus renewed in the spirit of our mind? Must not the kingdom of God have exerted an amazing force upon us? Must not we have seized upon it

with answering force? If it had not come to us with power, if we had not strongly laid hold upon it, and clung to it, would not even the common temptations of life have sufficed to detach us from it long ago?

And, again, we may be conscious of no startling revelation of truth, and of no sudden and convulsive response of our whole nature to it; but cannot we recall a time when our eyes were opened to recognize the immense value of the truths with which we had always been familiar, and of the spiritual gifts which we had unconsciously received? It may have been a quiet time; perchance the soul may have lain still and calm as the Divine disclosure dawned upon it: but was there not a time in which we were brought to a pause, and constrained to a conscious and heart-felt decision for truth, duty, Christ, God? Some friend spoke to us, it may be, and spoke so as to reach our heart, or some new influence fell upon our life, or clouds of sorrow darkened painfully over our head, and we were compelled to reflect, compelled to recognize, how much God had already taught us and given us; we felt ourselves urged, constrained, to make a distinct and conscious act of the will, to take Christ for our Lord and Friend and to avow ourselves believers in Him. We felt how much he had done for us, how much we were fain to do for Him; and, with a willing heart, we devoted ourselves to his service. When his truth and claims were thus pressed home upon us, and brought into conscious connection with our personal life, we rose to the occasion, and gave ourselves to Him who gave Himself for us. And what was that but the kingdom

of heaven coming with force to us personally, and our laying hold upon it with force?

Since then, at many times, in divers ways, that kingdom has been "energized" for us, and we have strangely and unwontedly felt its power; we have been made aware that, if we would fully enter into it, we must rise into a new type of character or into new degrees of devotion. What solemn moments come to us all in the quiet hours of meditation or worship, or in the excitements of intense joy, or in the depressions of profound grief! How often do we feel that, as yet, our hearts are torn by contending passions and aims; that, for men who profess to love truth and righteousness and God before all, we are too much under the influence of indolence, of habit, of forms, of moods and tempers; that we suffer the world to be too much with us; that our aims are too low, too many, too diverse; that our affections are not fixed firmly, and supremely, and unalterably on the things that are spiritual and eternal! And at such times, perhaps, a gracious influence sweeps over our souls; a light from heaven shines in upon us, and in that light we see our life, and its meaning and purpose, more distinctly: we feel that if only we were to break with evil once for all, to become perfect in our devotion to the Divine Will and to carry out our own deepest convictions, we might bring an unbroken unity into our lives, know the peace which passeth all understanding, and enter on a joy to which all joys of sense and time are gross and unclean.

Thus the kingdom of heaven "energizes" itself within us, clothes itself, with new force; and, if we

are men of force, we rise to the occasion; we redouble our endeavours to subdue the evil that is in us, and to foster the good; we give ourselves with new zeal to the service of Christ, and of that world which He has redeemed: for a little while duty grows easy to us, self-sacrifice at least possible, and we are absorbed in our resolve to live a truly Christian life.

Alas, it is but for a little while! Our goodness is like the morning dew, which soon passeth away. But, thank God, like the dew, if it soon pass, it also leaves a blessing behind it, and helps to make our character purer, stronger, and more fruitful toward God than it was before. S. COX.

STYLE AND CHARACTER OF ST. PETER.

IT has been suggested in a previous article[1] that the Gospel of St. Mark was written by one who drew his information from an eye-witness of the events which he records, and that this eye-witness was, in all probability, the Apostle St. Peter. If this be so, there ought to be found in other parts of the New Testament, where that Apostle appears as a principal actor, peculiarities of style similar to those we have noticed in the Second Gospel. The sentences recorded by the other Evangelists as the utterances of St. Peter are too brief to supply us with any material for such an inquiry. They have their own value in helping us to determine the character of the man, and to judge what form any teaching which he gave would be likely to assume, and they will receive

[1] THE EXPOSITOR, vol. ii. pp. 269–284 (October 1875).

notice hereafter. But in the Acts of the Apostles some incidents are recorded in which St. Peter was the principal, in some the sole, apostolic actor, and the narrative of which must, certainly in most of the cases, have been derived, in the first instance, from the Apostle's own lips. Here, then, we have an exact reproduction of the circumstances under which it is suggested that St. Mark wrote. Are the same characteristics of style to be found in these narratives as have been noticed in the Gospel?

Let us look first at the account (Acts iii.) of the cure of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. It is true that St. John was the companion of St. Peter on this occasion, and that the narrative might have been derived from him; but the beloved Disciple plays a part so subordinate in the scene, and is so little noticed by the historian, that we feel no doubt it is to St. Peter's more prompt tongue we are indebted for the form which the record assumes. And in the first sentence of it we find a note of the time of the miracle, exactly in accordance with the practice in St. Mark: "Peter and John went up together into the temple *at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.*" In the next verse the expression, "he was carried," is quite in the pictorial style of the Gospel (and even more graphic than the English is the Greek ἐβαστάζετο), making a scene in a single word, and is succeeded by a most animated description: "Whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms." Who-

ever gave these details of the event was one on whom outward circumstances and surroundings made a deep impression, and who could reproduce with vivid language every particular which he was so quick to notice. The whole description is teeming with life. And as we proceed the picture becomes even more vigorous. We have first, again quite in the manner of St. Mark's Gospel, the very words of St. Peter's two short speeches to the cripple, and then comes the picture-like description of the miracle: "He took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: and they knew that it was he which sat for alms." The narrator of this scene was one who made a mental photograph of all the attendant circumstances, and has been able to give to the historian a most life-like account of it. Some of the phraseology is much like what we have noticed in St. Mark. Compare *πιάσας αὐτὸν τῆς δεξιᾶς χειρὸς* of this narrative with such an expression as *οὐκ εἰμι ἱκανὸς κύψας λῦσαι τὸν ἱμαντα* (Mark i. 7), and we see that in *πιάσας*, as in *κύψας*, the graphic element of the story is greatly resident in a single expression. We may notice too the word *immediately*. St. Mark's Gospel abounds with that word, and though the Greek equivalent here is *παραχρῆμα*, and not the *εὐθέως* and *εὐθὺς*, so common in the Gospel, yet the employment of any word with this sense as a mark of time is a peculiarity of style which deserves attention, for it is very Petrine. It

occurs in the account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v. 10): "She fell down straightway" (παραχρῆμα) "at his feet, and yielded up the ghost." Also in the narrative of the raising of Æneas (Acts ix. 34), where the first story must have come from the lips of St. Peter: "And he arose immediately" (εὐθέως) Again, in Chap xi. 11, where St. Peter is describing his vision before the Apostles and brethren in Judea: "And, behold, *immediately*" (ἐξαυτῆς), says he, "there were three men already come unto the house." And, once more, in Chap. xii. 10, the account of his delivery out of prison: "And forthwith" (εὐθέως) "the angel departed from him." This trick of language, slight though it be, is just one of those trifles which indicate, more powerfully than almost anything else could do, the close connection between the source of the narratives in the Acts and the writer of the Gospel of St. Mark. Nor is the variation of the word in the Greek a point which can at all disturb the force of the comparison. The vivid style is conveyed by each word alike, and in the mouth of a reporter they would be readily interchanged ; while it is to be noted that in St. Mark one of these variants (ἐξαυτῆς) occurs (Chap. vi. 25) in the account of the death of John the Baptist.

Now we can easily see how much the form which this history of the miracle at the Temple gate assumes has been influenced by the character of St. Luke's informant, if we compare the notice thereof with that of another miracle of the same nature which he also records in the Acts, but of which he must have been informed by a very different narrator. When St. Paul visited Lystra (Acts xiv.) he restored a cripple afflicted in exactly the same way as was he that sat

at the Beautiful Gate. If St. Luke's informant had been the same in each case, or the composition of both accounts had been entirely his own, there was as much to call for graphic description in the one set of circumstances as in the other. But see how differently this narrative runs: "And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: the same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked." The particulars of the affliction and the cure are almost exactly the same, but how widely diverse is the way in which they are put before the reader! St. Peter's miracle is set forth with all its surroundings, so that we can call it up before our own minds as we are reading, while that of St. Paul is confined to the merest necessary detail. It is true that in the latter case there ensued a great excitement among the people of Lystra in consequence of the miracle, for they took the Apostles for Divine beings, and made preparations to offer a sacrifice unto them. But all this must have been only after the lapse of a considerable time. Oxen and garlands were not provided in a moment; and this part of the story can in no way be regarded as a feature in the description of the miracle of healing which concludes with the end of the quotation we have just made. And we see at once when the two accounts are put side by side how much the one narrator differed from the other in the power of graphic description.

There is, beside, very interesting artistic evidence of this. Raphael has made each of these miracles the subject of one of his famous cartoons. But in the case of the miracle at Lystra he has chosen for his picture not any point of time at which the miracle was wrought, but has selected the after-events of the intended sacrifice and the apostolic remonstrance, because in the actual account of the cure there were no details on which to exercise his pencil. But the earlier description of St. Peter's miracle has supplied him with all his materials. He has found an artist in the narrator, and has there made all the interest to centre on the moment when the cure was performed. So graphic is the entire story of what took place at the Beautiful Gate that there was nothing left for his imagination to elaborate.

Of a like character is the account given us (Acts ix. 36) of the raising of Dorcas. Here the description of what took place must have come, in the first instance, from the lips of St. Peter. And we need only read the story to see that we have in it all such circumstantial adjuncts as we should have expected the writer of St. Mark's Gospel to supply: "When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive." This account is the language

of a man most diligent in the use of his eyes, and who was able to store up and reproduce with much faithfulness the particulars of all he saw. And it is to be noticed how, artist-like, he makes the interest in all he narrates centre round a single point. He takes in no distant or unconnected details, but all that goes to make up the scene close around his eye sees and his mind registers with entire completeness.

For comparison we can again put the account of the raising of Dorcas side by side with the restoration to life of Eutychus (Acts xx.) at Troas, and we shall find exactly the same differences as before: "And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him." Here, in the midst of a Christian congregation, an accident happens of a most startling and appalling kind. There can hardly be a doubt that the dead man had many who were interested in him among the audience; nay, the very words of the Apostle shew that the accident was a source of trouble to the brethren; nor can we suppose that, on the part of the Apostle, there was lacking that earnest prayer to God for the restoration of the lost life which forms so touching a feature of the narrative of St. Peter's miracle. Yet of all this we have not a word, and the description is almost painful in its baldness and lack of warmth. There was a vast difference between the mental crucibles through

which these scenes severally passed, but the former has its counterpart in many a passage of St. Mark's Gospel,

Once more, in the account of St. Peter's vision, which must of course have been derived primarily from his own description, the wealth of detail is most striking. And still more remarkable are these features of St. Peter's style if we consider that they may not have come to St. Luke at first-hand. Yet, in spite of that, there was so marked a character impressed on the story at first that even passing from mouth to mouth has not been able to obliterate it. The precise and dramatic introduction forming the account of Cornelius is exactly in the manner of St. Mark's Gospel. Cornelius and his office and character are precisely described; the time carefully noticed at which the vision appeared to him; the interlocutions of the angel and the centurion recorded as a direct conversation. But it is when we come to the vision which was sent to the Apostle that his graphic characteristics are most shewn (Acts x. 9–16): "On the morrow, as they [the messengers of Cornelius] went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray about the *sixth hour:* and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into heaven." Here, all in one passage, we find such notes of time as those to which we have already alluded, dramatic casting of the narrative, and most picturesque description of the whole occurrence. And it is worth while to notice that the Apostle uses the word ὀθόνη for a sheet, a word which is often applied to loose bellying sails of ships, and it is most likely from his employment of this word that the form of vessel which appeared to him in his vision recalled an image most familiar to his previous life,—the wind-stretched canvas of the craft on the Lake of Galilee. Now compare this narrative with all that we gather, and it is no little, from the three accounts of St. Paul's vision on his way to Damascus (Acts ix. xxii. and xxvii.), and we shall once more be obliged to own that St. Peter's power of description was peculiarly his own.

We will take but one more of these examples, and that because we have a companion picture to place by its side. Compare the account of St. Peter's deliverance out of prison at Jerusalem with that of St. Paul at Philippi. In the latter (Acts xvi. 24–30) there is more fulness of description than is usual where St. Paul is concerned. The fettered prisoners, the midnight singing, the earthquake, followed by a general loosing of the fetters, the agony and terror of the gaoler, Paul's consolation of him, and his conversion, form abundant details; but we

see at once that but few of them are of the pictorial character which would be sure to be seen in everything that St. Peter narrated. For read the story of his deliverance, and you see it all in action (Acts xii.): "Now *about that time* Herod the King . . . proceeded further to take Peter also. . . . Peter, therefore, was kept in prison: . . . and when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and . . . when they were passed the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him." Here, likewise, the first narration must have been St. Peter's own, given that night in "the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark," and whose Gospel abounds with descriptions which bear the closest resemblance in style and character to those which must, in the first instance, have been told by St. Peter's own mouth, and which would be most likely, from the vigour which he infused into all that he said, to preserve their first form, in the main, till they were committed to writing.

Space forbids us to go further into detail, but we may briefly observe that it is like the writer of the Second Gospel to say, "These are not drunken, seeing it is but the *third hour of the day*" (Acts ii. 15); to tell us that "the disciples were put in hold *unto the next day, for it was now eventide*" (Acts vi. 3); to record (Chap. iv. 22) that "the man was *about forty years old* on whom this miracle of healing was shewed;" to mention (Chap. v. 7) that "it was *about the space of three hours after*" the death of Ananias that Sapphira came in; and to notice (Chap. ix. 33) that Æneas "had kept his bed *eight years;*" and to inform us (Chap. ix. 43) that *Peter* "*tarried many days* in Joppa with one Simon a tanner;" and that when the messengers of Cornelius came (Chap. x. 23) for him, he lodged them and "went away with them *on the morrow*," and "*the morrow after* they entered into Cæsarea."

In St. Mark's Gospel, narrations, where they can be so cast, are made dramatic by the introduction of the actual speakers, and by giving their direct remarks dialogue-wise. This is exactly what is done in the Acts in the account of the death of Ananias, in the history of the visit to Cornelius, in the delivery of Peter out of prison, and, notably, in the scene at the house of Mary while Peter was knocking for admission. Most of these must be St. Peter's own descriptions; probably all of them are so.

Once more, it exactly accords with such precise details as are given in St. Mark's Gospel to be told that Peter was delivered to *four quaternions* of soldiers to be kept (Acts xii. 4). It is exactly like

the descriptions in that Gospel to be informed (Chap. x. 25) that "Cornelius met Peter, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him;" and to have such a picture set before us as is given (Chap. v. 23) when the officers return to the High Priest and Council, and report, "The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within." It is quite in the style of that Gospel to add vividness to a description by a single word, as is done (Chap. iv. 10) in the sentence, "Even by Jesus of Nazareth doth this man *stand* here before you whole;" and to describe Christ's crucifixion as St. Peter twice does (Chaps. v. 30, x. 39), "whom ye slew and *hanged on a tree.*" Nearly all these characteristic features can be traced with certainty to the lips of St. Peter, and they harmonize entirely with the language and style of the Gospel of St. Mark. We are not warranted hereby in calling St. Peter the author of that Gospel, but the probability amounts to very little short of certainty that it was compiled under his superintendence and from his recollections at a time when they were most vivid; and that, whatever may have been the date at which this Gospel was given to the world, the records contained in it are some of the most nearly contemporary with our Lord's life that we possess.

Let us now turn to the notices of St. Peter that are to be found in the Gospels. From them we can learn nothing about his language or his style; but they give us great insight into the character of the man.

(1) And, first, we may notice here too how *keen-sighted* he was, and alive to everything which was passing round about him. He it is who, at the outset of Christ's ministry, is the first to notice (Mark i. 33) the increasing fame of Jesus and the gathering together of the crowds near the place where He was, and to announce it to his Master in his own hyperbolical manner: "All men seek thee." He, too, was clearly the observer and spokesman at the time when Christ's garment was touched (Luke viii. 45) by the woman who had so long been afflicted with an issue of blood. "Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" was a remark dictated by what appeared to his noticing eyes an inconsistency in his Master's question. He, too, is the first to observe the speedy fulfilment of Christ's curse on the barren fig-tree (Mark xi. 21); and the same characteristic led him to catch at once the sad gaze of the Lord when it was turned towards his fallen disciple at the moment of his denial (Luke xxii. 61).

(2) Nor is he content to notice all that passes. He is ever *ready to apply*, in a practical manner, all that he hears and sees to the case of himself and his fellows. Does Christ set forth the best method of dealing with a brother who shall trespass? St. Peter at once comes to him with the practical question how he might work out this lesson of forgiveness in his own life. Is Christ very pointed in his observations about the need for sacrifice on the part of those who would enter the kingdom of heaven? (Matt. xix. 27.) It is St. Peter's inquiry which attempts to apply the teaching of his Lord to their

own circumstances with the words, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" Exactly in the same spirit, and from a desire to make practical use of what has fallen from his Lord's lips on the subject of that which defileth a man, does he ask (Matt. xv. 15), "Declare unto us this parable." In the like manner he takes home to himself the remarks of Jesus on the coming desertion of all his disciples (Matt. xxvi. 33), and almost indignantly repudiates the idea that he could so grievously offend. The same readiness to apply what he hears is seen when he inquires, after the lessons on the duty of watchfulness (Luke xii. 41), "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" And when, in almost the last interview, Jesus foretells, in solemn words (John xxi. 18), the sufferings by which his now penitent and forgiven disciple should glorify God, St. Peter, in his wonted wise, asks, as he turns and beholds St. John, "Lord, and what shall this man do?"

(3) As we should expect from his quick and deep appreciation of all that passed, he was a man who *came to the front in everything that was to be done.* He was a man of action, and of prompt action. He is well characterized by the εὐθὺς, "immediately," of which he is so fond in his language. His active tendencies display themselves (Matt. xiv. 28) when he ventures on the stormy waves to come to Jesus as He is walking on the sea. Even in his astonished condition at the Transfiguration, his anxiety to be doing something is not checked (Matt. xvii. 4): "Let us make here three tabernacles." The natural impulse of the man breaks out even at this time,

when another Evangelist, who, as we believe, knew most about Peter's feelings (Mark ix. 5), tells us that he was sore afraid, and "wist not what to say." So, too, when the news of the resurrection was brought to the disciples by the women, though it is expressly stated (Luke xxiv. 11) that the "words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not," yet not the more on that account does the energetic disciple sit still. No; "Peter arose, and *ran* to the sepulchre." the narrative continues, as one bent on knowing for himself the verity of what he had heard. And though we read elsewhere (John xx. 4) that another disciple accompanied, nay, even outran Peter, yet there is added a notice which bespeaks his greater activity, for, though not arriving first, he was yet the first to venture upon entering the late vacated tomb. It is Peter who beckons to St. John (John xiii. 24) at the Last Supper that he should set their doubts at rest, by inquiring of Jesus who it should be that should betray Him. His sword was the only one that we hear of (John xviii. 10) as being drawn at the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Even in that sad period (and sadder than for all must it have been for him who was penitent, yet unforgiven) between the resurrection and Christ's appearance by the Sea of Galilee, the same active disposition must shew itself. His life consists in always doing something, and so we find him at this time betaking himself to his old occupation as a fisherman. And there is no lack of character in the brief remark (John xxi. 3) by which he announces his intention to the rest. He had been ready enough with words on most occasions,

but this was not the time for them, and perhaps he was learning to keep a guard over the tongue which had promised so stoutly and failed so terribly. He merely says, "I go a-fishing." And when the night's work was over, and the morning dawn shewed them Jesus on the shore, the energetic nature of Peter breaks forth as once before. That disciple whom Jesus loved was the first to recognize their risen Lord, and he "saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, for he was naked, and did cast himself into the sea," that he might be the first to present himself in his repentance to the Master from whom he had testified that it was death to be severed. Precisely the same longing to be wherever action was in progress brought him alone of the fugitive band of disciples back to the scene of the Saviour's trial. He had fled like the rest, but his nature was different from theirs, and, doubtless with a bosom filled with self-reproach at his cowardice, he turns after the beloved Disciple and makes his way into the hall where the inquest was proceeding, with a full resolve that his lately-given promise should not be proved utterly untrustworthy.

(4) Although St. Peter must have been a man of ready speech, he was *not argumentative.* He does not debate any question. When he and his companions are bidden (Acts iv. 18) to speak no more in the name of Jesus, his sole reply is, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And on another like occasion (Acts v. 29), "We ought to obey God rather than men." Such a state-

ment once enunciated admits of no question in his own mind, nor does he consider further argument necessary for others. What God has directed, that he is bound to perform, and will persevere in, heedless of consequences. Similarly, when defending his conduct in going to Cornelius, he gives nothing but an outline of all the facts, concluding with the clenching question (Acts xi. 17), "What was I, that I could withstand God?" In like manner, in the Gospels, on the occasion of his call (Luke v.), he does not debate on the uselessness of returning in the day-time to renew the toil which had been so unproductive all the night long. And just so, in his reception into favour again after the resurrection, it is not argument that he employs to account for or palliate his fault, or to establish his penitence, but a simple appeal to the unerring knowledge of Jesus (John xxi. 17): "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

(5) Akin to this part of his character is his *impulsiveness*, amounting almost to self-will, in some of the incidents related. He not only did not discuss a matter in his own mind, but he did not wait to ask any advice. To this trait it may be that our Lord is alluding when (John xxi. 18) He says to his disciple, "When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest." The ready blow, the hasty speech, be it of earnest testimony to his Lord, or misunderstanding rebuke, or even angry curse—all tell us how much he was the creature of the moment. When Christ asks of his followers the question (Matt. xvi. 15), "Whom say ye that I am?" we see Peter ready, with noble fervour, to

reply at once : "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." But in the very same Chapter we find him with equal fervour, though less nobly displayed, beginning to rebuke the Master whom he had just confessed, because he spake to them of his approaching sufferings. So, too, when Jesus is washing the feet of the disciples (John xiii.) the impulsive character of Peter is shewn quite as strongly in his compliance as in his previous refusal. But Christ had work for his disciple to do which needed this element in his character. Perhaps no one else in the Apostolic band would have been ready to go and preach the Gospel to Cornelius except the formerly headstrong impulsive Simon. We know with what questioning the news of his visit was received in Jerusalem, and also how long the exclusive spirit prevailed in the early Christian societies, even to such an extent as to cause Peter on one occasion (Gal. ii. 11) to run counter to his first conduct, and withdraw himself from the society of Gentile converts. We may well conclude, then, that none but the impetuous and energetic Peter was found fit to receive his Lord's revelation concerning the reception of the Gentiles, because none else would so promptly carry out the new lesson into act.

Such are the chief marks of character that may be gathered from the notices of St. Peter in the Acts and in the Gospels. It remains hereafter to inquire what lessons would be most likely to be given by such a man when he himself became a "fisher of men." If in such an examination we can recognize the characteristics of St. Peter, tempered it may be and disciplined, but still the same in the Epistles as

in the History; if we can find in the teaching of the Letters the necessary sequence and out-growth of the life which is sketched for us in the Gospels and the Acts; and if, further, we can discern the same mind and character (modified only by circumstances of whose operation we are not left without evidence) in the Second Epistle as in the First, we may, from our inquiry, be better able to picture to ourselves something of the after-life of this chief of the Apostles, who so soon disappears from our view in the historical books; and may also bind into somewhat closer unity all that in the New Testament is connected with the name of St. Peter.

J. RAWSON LUMBY.

THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

VI.—PHILADELPHIA. (*Rev.* iii. 7–13.)

THE city of Philadelphia, situated at the foot of Mount Tmolus, about twenty-eight miles south-east of Sardis, named after Attalus Philadelphus, King of Pergamos, and the centre of the wine trade of the region lying on the frontiers of Lydia and Phrygia, presented, so far as we know, the same phenomena of religious and social life as its nearest neighbours. There, too, there was a population mainly, of course, Heathen, but including at least three other elements distinct from it and from each other,—Jews, Jewish Christians, and converts from Heathenism. What its spiritual condition was we gather from the Message, and from that only. Three facts connected with it may, however, be briefly

noticed, as having some historical interest. 1. That, like Sardis, it had suffered severely from the great Asiatic earthquake in the reign of Tiberius. 2. That of all the Seven Churches it had the longest duration of prosperity as a Christian city, and is still a spacious town, with the remains of not less than twenty-four churches. 3. That of all the seven its name alone appears in the catalogue of modern cities. The meaning of the word, "brotherly love," or "love of the brethren," perhaps also the special character of the promises connected with it in the Apocalyptic Message, commended it to the mind of William Penn as the fittest he could find for the city which he founded on the banks of the Delaware; and so it has won for the name of the old Asiatic city a higher niche of fame than it would otherwise ever have filled in the world's history.

The name by which the Sender of the Message here describes himself is that of "*the holy, the true, he that hath the key of David, he who openeth, and none shall shut, he who shutteth, and none shall open.*" Each of these epithets has a special significance, and calls for a few words in explanation of it. 1. "*The holy.*" The word here used is, it must be remembered, ἅγιος, not ὅσιος, and represents the holiness of consecration rather than that which is ethical and indwelling. As such, in by far the great majority of instances, it is used either of the "saints" as consecrated, in spite of manifold individual weaknesses, to a life of devotion; or of the Temple and its sanctuaries, literal or spiritual, as dedicated to God's service (1 Cor. iii. 17; Ephes. ii. 21; Heb. viii. 2 and *passim*); more prominently still of the Holy Spirit,

as partaking that otherwise incommunicable sanctity which belongs to the Divine Essence. Of the person of the Lord Jesus it is used but rarely. It would seem, however, to have been one of the names, more or less accepted as equivalent to that of the Messiah, which were current during his ministry. It came from the lips of the Gadarene demoniac when he uttered the cry, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Luke iv. 34). But it was not only from those lips that that word had come before in the hearing of the Apostle. If we take the reading of all the great MSS., including the Sinaitic, we find it was the form of the confession borne by St. Peter and recorded in John vi. 69: "Thou art the Christ," not as in our Version, "the Son of the living God," but, "the Holy One of God." That name is now recalled to the Disciple's mind in special connection, we may believe, with the memories of that day, but also, and more prominently, with the promises with which this Message ends, every one of which especially brings out the idea of consecration, the pillar in the temple of God, the name and the city of God.

If textual criticism has helped us to trace the first of these great adjectives to its source, so, indirectly, it suggests the subtle links of association by which "the holy" and "the true" were connected. For it was on the self-same day that the beloved Disciple had heard from his Master's lips, for the first time, that word thus applied, when He spoke of Himself as "the *true* bread that came down from heaven." Whatever may have been its equivalent in the Aramaic which our Lord spoke, it is a familiar fact

that the Greek word which St. John uses (ἀληθινός) was with him a favourite and characteristic one. It expressed, more than the simpler ἀληθής, "true with all the fulness of truth," true not only as opposed to false, but as distinguished from all shadows of, and approximations to, the truth. So we have, for example, the "*true* light" (John i. 9), the "*true* worshippers" (John iv. 23), the "only *true* God" (John xvii. 3). The last application had raised it almost to the level, not only of a divine attribute, but of a divine Name, and it is as such that it is used here. The Lord who speaks to the Churches claims to be holy as the Father is holy, true as He is true.

In the words that follow we have a manifest reproduction of a passage in that strange episode in the prophecy of Isaiah (xxii. 15–25) which contrasts the character and the fortunes of Shebna the scribe and Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was "over the household" of Hezekiah. While the doom of shame and exile was predicted for the former, for the latter there was honour and advancement. "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder: so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." His influence in the great crisis that was coming on the kingdom of Judah was to be mighty for good. He was to be "a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of David." Here, of course, the historical bearing of the words falls entirely into the background. And the words are chosen simply because they described, in terms which the prophecy had made familiar, that aspect of the highest sovereignty which was now most needed. They are not identical, it will be

noticed, with those which described the Lord of the Churches as having the keys of Hades and of Death (Chap. i. 19). There He was manifested as extending his sway into the world that lies behind the veil, the region of the unseen and spiritual, contemplated on its darker side. Here, in closer analogy with the promise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter (Matt. xvi. 19), what He claims is sovereignty over "the house of David," over the kingly palace of the Son of David, over the Church, as being the house of God. The right of admitting into that palace of the great King is his, and his alone. Others in vain admit when He excludes, or exclude when He admits.

The next clause gives the more immediate application of the claim: "*I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.*" As before, I take the words as spoken primarily of the Angel or Bishop of the Church in his personal character; and, secondly, of the Church so far as it was represented by him. So taken, we cannot doubt that the "*works*" which the Lord "*knew*" were such as He recognized as being worthy of all praise. And the context at once determines the nature of those works and adds another link to the chain of evidence which shews that the teaching of the writer of the Apocalypse was, in all essential points, one with the teaching of St. Paul. If there was any phrase which more than another was characteristic of the language of the Apostle of the Gentiles, it was that of the "open door" which we are now considering. At Ephesus, a "great and effectual door" was opened unto him (1 Cor. xvi. 19).

At Troas a "door was opened unto him of the Lord" (2 Cor. ii. 12). He entreats those to whom he writes, to pray "that God would open to him a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ" (Col. iv. 3). So, in like manner, his friend and fellow-worker, St. Luke, records how that the Lord had "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts xiv. 27). In all these cases the open door refers to the admission of the Gentile converts into the great house of God, the "opportunities for the mission work of the Church" (Alford) which the providence of God placed in the preacher's way. That phrase must, in the nature of things, have become current in the Churches which owed their very existence to the labours of St. Paul; and when it came to the ear and was recorded by the pen of St. John, it could not fail to recall the same thought and to signify the same thing. The words which came to the Angel of the Church of Philadelphia were accordingly of the nature of an assurance and a promise. He was encouraged to persevere in the work in which he had already laboured so well by the declaration that in this he was a fellow-worker with his Lord, that no narrowing exclusiveness, no bitter antagonism should hinder its completion, that the door had been opened wide by Him who had the key of the house of David.

And this promise comes as the reward of faithfulness in the use of the opportunities that had already been granted: "*Because thou hast little power*,[1] *and yet didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.*"

[1] Not "*a* little strength," as in our English Version, which lays an undue stress on the substantive rather than the adjective.

The words point to something in the past history of the Church of Philadelphia and its ruler, the nature of which we can only infer from them and from their context. Some storm of persecution had burst upon him, probably, as at Smyrna, instigated by the Jews or the Judaizing section of the Church. They sought to shut the door which he had found open, and would have kept so. They were strong, and he was weak; numbers were against him, and one whose faith was less real and living might have yielded to the pressure. But he, though not winning, like Antipas, the martyr's crown, had yet displayed the courage of the confessor, had kept the word, the doctrine, the creed, of his Lord, the mystery of the faith, the brotherhood of mankind in Christ, which was, in St. Paul's language, the substance of "the word of God," and had not been tempted to deny his name, the name of that Jesus to whom the Jews in their frenzy said, Anathema (1 Cor. xii. 3), through any fear of man. Like the faithful servant in the parable, he had thus been faithful in a very little (Matt. xxv. 23); and therefore, as the promise that follows shews, he was to be made "ruler over many things."

The reappearance of the same description as that which met us in the Epistle to the Church of Smyrna, points, as I have said, to the quarter from which the attack came. Here also we have those who "*are of the synagogue of Satan, that say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie.*" So far they seem to have gained the mastery. Though resisted, they are yet the stronger party. But the day of retribution is not far off. "*I will make them to come and*

worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Before long, in that "*hour of trial which was about to come upon the whole world,*" in the storm of persecution which, coming from Heathen panic and suspicion, would involve both Christian and Jew alike, the man who had been faithful in his work would be courted as a protector even by those who had been his bitterest enemies. They would then bow down and do him homage, and would recognize, it may be, in the outward events of life, it may be, in the very fact that his power to protect them would flow from his influence with those Gentiles against whose admission they had so vehemently protested, that his Lord had "*loved him,*" and would love him even to the end. He who had "*kept the word of the endurance of Christ,*" the message which bade him endure, even as Christ also had endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, the word which had passed, we may well believe, into a proverb, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved," should, in his turn, be "kept" from that hour of trial or temptation, the "fiery trial' of 1 Pet. iv. 12, which was about to spread over the "*whole world*" of the Roman Empire, to "*try those that dwelt upon the earth.*"

And now, as before, in reference not only, or chiefly, to the far-off event that shall close the world's history, but to a nearer and more individual advent, we have the promise, "*I come quickly.*" The trial should not be long. The issue was not far off. Therefore "*hold fast that which thou hast,*" thy zeal, thy faith, thy endurance, thy open door, "*that no man take thy crown*"—that

crown of life (Rev. ii. 10) and righteousness (2 Tim. iv. 8) which is reserved for the faithful combatant. The promise to him that overcometh is, however, in this instance, more definite, and, if one may so speak, more appropriate, than the simple crown of the conqueror: "*I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name.*" The circle of imagery into which we are here brought anticipates the more wonderful and glorious visions with which the Apocalypse closes. There also we hear of "the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" (Rev. xxi. 10). But there are differences of detail in the terms of the promise here which call for notice, and are, each of them, singularly suggestive. (1) In the vision of the holy city the Seer beheld no temple in it, for "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were the temple thereof" (Chap. xxi. 22). That which constitutes a sanctuary in the highest sense of the word temple (*ναός*) is the presence felt and, it may be, seen, of the god to whom it is dedicated. So our bodies are temples (*ναοί*) of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19). So the Lord Jesus spake of the temple of his body (John ii. 21). But in that heavenly city (itself, when we analyze it, but the symbol of a reality which as yet we know only in part and through types and shadows) that Divine Presence is everywhere manifesting itself to the whole company of the blessed according to the capacity of each; and just as the material universe,

in its relation to the creative power and the permanent and immanent energy of the Creator as sustaining it, is the Temple of the Lord God Almighty, so, where there is the presence of the Lamb, one with the *Logos*, revealing the Fatherhood and redeeming love of God, there also is the Temple which is wherever that Presence is. Here, however, in the earlier stage of the symbolic apocalypse, the mind of the Seer was not as yet ripe for that thought. It is to come to him when he *sees* the city. So long as he hears of it only by the hearing of the ear, he is to picture it to himself as having a temple analogous to that of the earthly Jerusalem, with which he was familiar. And in that Temple he that overcame was to be made "*a pillar.*" It will be remembered that that was a title which, in its relation to the Church of God, had been borne by the Apostle himself. He, with Cephas and James, had been among those who seemed to be "pillars" of the Ecclesia at Jerusalem (Gal. ii. 9), sustaining the fabric of its polity. And now he hears the gracious promise that, as he had been in the earthly Ecclesia, which was the Temple of the living God, so should every one that overcometh be in that heavenly Temple. And that position once gained, should never afterwards be forfeited. "*He shall go no more out.*" Here on earth there is to the last the possibility of failure. The surest guide may wander from the right path. The pillar may give way, and need removal, that the fabric may remain unshaken.[1]

[1] It is just possible that there may here be a local reference to the earthquakes from which Philadelphia had suffered, and which may have so shaken the fabric of many of its temples that some, at least, of their pillars had to be removed and new ones erected in their place.

But there the victors shall abide for ever, each, under this aspect of the symbol, a column in the Infinite Temple, as each, under another aspect, had been as a "living stone" in the structure of the temple upon earth. He that had the keys of the house of David would close the gates upon those who were received into the Holy City, so that there should be no departure.

"*I will write upon him the name of my God.*"[1] So, in Chap. xxii. 4, we read of the servants of God in the heavenly city that "his name shall be on their foreheads," and in Chap. ix. 4, of those "who have the seal of God upon their foreheads." We can scarcely fail to see in this promise a reference to the thin plate of gold which was borne upon the forehead of Aaron and his successors in the office of the High Priest, and upon which was to be graven, "like the engraving of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD" (Exod. xxviii. 36). And so the promise takes its place side by side with those which speak of the elect of God as being, like their Lord, sharers in a kingly priesthood. Their life of consecration, their fulfilment of the priestly ideal on earth, will hereafter be recognized by the consummation of that life in the heavenly Temple in which they have been made as pillars, not mute and motionless, like the columns in human form of an earthly temple, but living, moving, worshipping.

"*And the name of the city of my God, which is*

[1] It has been a question whether the "writing upon *him*, or *it*" (the Greek admits, of course, of either rendering), refers to the pillar as such, or to the man as represented by it. Probably the frequent use of human figures in the Caryatides of Greek temples suggested the identification of the two.

New Jerusalem." Were the thoughts of the Seer directed here, also, to the prophetic symbolism of the past, or does the mystery of the new name belong entirely to the far future, unrevealed to him and therefore hidden from us? An interpreter may well shrink from speaking over-boldly in answer to that question; but, on the whole, the analogy of the symbolic imagery of the Apocalypse generally suggests the conclusion that the key of the mystery is to be found in that volume of the Prophets which was to St. John so inexhaustible a storehouse. The new name might be that which meets us at the close of the prophecy of Ezekiel, as the name of the renewed and glorified city which he saw in vision, "*Jehovah-shammah*"—"the Lord is there" (Ezek. xlviii. 35). More probably, as it seems to me, both because the name itself is of deeper and richer significance and because the Messianic prophecies of Jeremiah, connected as they were with the proclamation of the New Covenant (Jer. xxxi. 31), were more prominent in the thoughts of men than those of Ezekiel, we may think of "*Jehovah-tsidkenu*"—"the Lord our Righteousness"—which was, we read in Jer. xxxiii. 16, to be the name of the city in its glorified and transfigured state, no less than of the Anointed King, as in the more familiar words of Jer. xxiii. 6. Every inhabitant of that celestial city would count it his glory to have that name written upon his forehead, the sign of that completed citizenship in heaven (the πολιτεῦμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς of Phil. iii. 20) which had been his joy and comfort upon earth.

Last and greatest in the list of names which the Conqueror is to bear as the insignia of his victory

is the "new name" of the Lord Himself. Here we are reminded of the analogous promise to the Church of Pergamos,—the "new name," though not in that instance of the Lord who speaks, but of the disciple who has been faithful to the end. There we saw that the new name was the symbol of a new and transfigured character, and this may guide us to a right apprehension of the meaning of the promise here. The name is not one that is merely "new" now, but one that shall be new in the day of the final victory. It is, therefore, more even than those two great names, "the Word of God" and "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Chap. xix. 13–16), which the Apostle heard and beheld in one of his later visions. For these his own writings made familiar to the minds of men even during the time of struggle and incompleteness, and there was, besides these—written, it would seem, not, like the latter of those two names, on "the vesture and the thigh," but on the diadems that crowned his brow—another more mysterious name, seen but not understood even by the Seer, a name "which no one knoweth but himself." Full and rich as are the names of Jesus now, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Word, the Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, revealing what we can in some measure even now comprehend and realize, there will be in the completed glory of the kingdom a yet fuller revelation of all that He is in Himself, of all that He has been to us. Now "we know in part, but then we shall know even as also we are known; now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). We know not what we shall

be, but we know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; and that knowledge will find its adequate expression, as before, in a Name. And that Name written on him that overcometh will mark him not only as a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, but as the subject, nay, rather, as the heir of the Eternal King. E. H. PLUMPTRE.

GIDEON'S FLEECE.

THE story of Gideon's Fleece is one which will be read by different people in different ways. Some will probably regard it as one of those improbable stories of which so many are to be found in the Old Testament, which they despair of reducing to any sort of harmony with the facts of common life, and consequently reject as mere stories to be classed with the narrative of Balaam's ass and Joshua's bidding the sun to stand still; the absence of which from the pages of the Old Testament would make it, they suppose, much more trustworthy as an historical record, or, at all events, less open to reasonable objection: others, probably, will endeavour to account for it as the expression of Gideon's own fancy, and imagine that the story relates not what actually took place, but what he thought took place: while others, representing a number gradually becoming less and less, will accept the narrative as a miraculous one, and derive so much spiritual meaning from it as they may be able to extract.

The tendency to allegorize Holy Writ is indicative of an unhealthy condition of mind, and has often been productive of pernicious results. It is derogatory to

the Holy Spirit to conceive that his chief concern in the production of the Sacred Scriptures has been that of setting conundrums. And, in fact, there is no limit to the degree to which the habit of allegorizing may not be carried if we once surrender ourselves to the principle. St. Paul, indeed, discovered in the history of Hagar and Sarah an implied prophecy of the two covenants, but he did so in such a way as to leave no doubt upon the mind about the reality of the history. When, however, allegory has the effect of diverting our attention from the actual fact to the supposed idea foreshadowed by the fact, its tendency becomes fatal to the existence of history, which is valuable only as a record of fact. No doubt all actual history must involve the expression and illustration of certain principles which, perhaps, at the time of its occurrence are less obvious than the outward features of the history itself. It is only after the lapse of ages that the veil of incident begins, as it were, by degrees to wear away and to make more and more apparent the principle underlying it. And then, in proportion as this becomes striking and forcible, we are conscious of the tendency to question almost whether the particular expression or illustration of the hidden principle ever took place. It is characteristic of certain minds to be more or less open respectively to the influence of ideas or facts. For example, the Hindoo mind can with difficulty apprehend the value of historic fact. It is almost wholly under the power of ideas, and it regards history as merely the vehicle of abstract ideas, which are of more importance than the history itself. It is curious to trace the existence of a like tendency in the cognate mind

of modern Germany, which has frequently been evidenced by the habit of resolving everything into myths. In striking contrast to the Indo-Germanic mind is the Semitic mind of the Jews. They, as a nation, were almost wholly under the power of the concrete. They valued facts for their own sake, and were slow to perceive the operation of underlying principles. Thus their historical records deal largely in incidents and dates and names, and thereby assert their claim the more imperatively on our attention as transcripts of veritable fact. It is not impossible that this very slowness in the Jewish mind to appreciate abstract principle may account for the particular aspect of certain portions of their history. Modern investigations have tended to shew that the plagues of Egypt had in them certainly an element of the natural, although the manner in which they have been recorded is such as to conceal this almost entirely, and to leave us hardly anything to contemplate but the arbitrary display of supernatural power and the exercise of a supernatural will. It is possible, however, that, without any sacrifice of historical accuracy, a very different narrative of them might have been produced by a mind of a different order, more under the influence of ideas; or, at all events, it is certain that the Mosaic history resembles more nearly a sculpture in high relief than it does a painting in perspective. The illustrations on the monuments of Egypt, among which the youthful mind of the great Lawgiver had been trained, are singularly suggestive of much of the Jewish history; for, in both, events are represented not so much as they appear to us now, but rather as they cannot

fail to appear when adapted to one rigid and inflexible method of viewing or depicting them. That the earliest efforts of mankind in this direction would be naturally governed by analogous principles is shewn by the sculptures of Assyria, in which truth was, without doubt, a primary object, though the artist, in his efforts to attain it, achieved results which, to our modern ideas, are anything but true. It is inevitable that an historian of the same early period should be characterized by features of a similar kind, and hence the life-like, though at the same time the rigid and inflexible, representations of the Mosaic and early Jewish history.

It is, however, characteristic also of Holy Writ, in a degree that far surpasses any other writings whatever, that the incidents of its history not only serve to illustrate underlying principles, but also serve to give the promise of yet higher illustration of them. For instance, the deliverance out of Egypt manifestly reflects the spiritual deliverance from sin; the wanderings in the desert and the delayed occupation of Canaan, the struggles after the attainment of spiritual freedom and holiness of life, and the like; and consequently they answer in a remarkable manner to the redemption of Christ and the discipline of life in the journey to the land of heavenly rest. Precisely therefore as we recognize the hand of God in the history of the Exodus, it will become impossible for us not to see in that history a promise of the Redemption of Christ. If we acknowledge both incidents as Divine, it is impossible not to discern a Divine intention in the relation between them. And hence arises what is known in common popular

language as the relation between type and antitype. It tends to an unreal contemplation of the facts of history to dwell too exclusively or prominently on this relation; but the relation is one that we cannot but acknowledge if we acknowledge the history. The history does not exist for the sake of this relation, but this relation is the necessary accident of the conditions of the history, and it is a relation that must have been contemplated and designed, so far as the expression of the Divine Mind was intended to be marked in the incidents of the history.

It is not, however, by any means all the incidents of Jewish history in which we can trace a similar relation to subsequent events that we find in the earlier and later incidents of the Exodus. Indeed, it is natural to suppose that the impress of the Divine Will would not be stamped with equal clearness on every part of the history. In many cases that history would be left to develop itself after the ordinary and natural principles which operate in human affairs. Nor is this inconsistent with what we believe to be the method of God's dealings with individual men. We faithfully recognize a controlling Providence in every part of our lives; but in certain marked deliverances and acts of special mercy we are constrained to confess that the finger of God has been conspicuously manifested. The same Almighty Power, therefore, which operated wondrously at the Exodus, may not have ceased to operate during the era of the Judges or the Kings, although the way in which it operated may have been less exceptional and less conspicuous. If, however, there were any occasions when the power of God was exerted

in an exceptional way, it is only reasonable to suppose that such occasions of his manifestation would be fraught with more significance than the incident of the moment might demand. The appearance of the captain of the Lord's host to Joshua would have a very direct and intelligible meaning to him; but if the vision was a real one and not an illusion, the record of it could not but be charged with many important principles and lessons, not for Joshua only, but for all mankind. The whole value of such narratives lies in the reality of the event recorded. There is absolutely no lesson conveyed by the vision to Joshua, or to Manoah, if the vision itself was an unreal one. Whereas, if it actually was an incident in the series of a continuous Divine revelation, the value of it becomes infinitely enhanced; and thus those critics who depreciate the narrative for its own sake, and regard it as unworthy of credit for its absurdities, virtually start where they should conclude, by assuming its falsehood. For if the narrative is not false, it ceases to be absurd; it becomes a veritable and trustworthy record of the way in which the Almighty was content to convey the knowledge of his will to man.

Now let us apply these principles to the story of Gideon's fleece. Of course, if the story is not true, if the incidents were not as they are recorded, if there was no remarkable phenomenon witnessed, however the story of it may be accounted for, then we need not trouble ourselves about the narrative; it is a narrative and nothing more, simply on a par with the many narratives, equally marvellous and equally untrue, that we meet with in Herodotus.

But if this is not so, if the sign for which Gideon asked was a real sign, if it really was a sign which God vouchsafed to give him for his own encouragement, then verily it could not be a sign without a signification, and it is open to us to ponder and investigate its signification. Certainly, if we decide beforehand that it is neither consistent with the Divine dignity nor the character of the Divine actions to take such a course, there is an end to everything with which the action may be fraught; but this in a professedly and ostensibly Divine Record is clearly to prejudge the case. If the record be not divine, it clearly can have no divine meaning; whatever meaning it may have must be dependent on its verity as a record. The question should rather be whether, supposing the record to be a true one, it is possible for us to discover any signification underlying the sign which may tend to confirm its truth. That it is the chosen method of Almighty God to teach by signs is unquestionably the doctrine of the Bible. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign," cried Isaiah to the rebellious and unbelieving Ahaz. "These signs are written that ye might believe," said St. John of the miracles of Jesus. The whole ministry of Scripture is a ministry of signs, and in some cases signs have been asked faithfully, and sometimes they have been asked in unbelief. It was characteristic of the Jewish mind, St. Paul tells us, to seek after signs, perhaps from the very circumstance that their ancient literature was so full of them; but the ministry of signs was one of which even our blessed Lord did not hesitate to avail Himself when Moses and Elias were seen in

glory on the mountain of vision, and the angel appeared unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him in the hour of his great agony. Within certain limits, therefore, chiefly determined by the inward animus of the seeker after them, it is plainly allowable to ask for signs. Gideon had already given proof of his faith in the mission of God by incurring danger and the reproach of his friends for the sake of obedience to the Divine command; he might not unnaturally ask for further recognition of his work. And that recognition was given him. If we are to believe that these things were written for our learning, we may fairly infer that similar recognition and encouragement will not be withheld when it is needful for us to have it, if the prayer that asks for it is the prayer of faith. It is essential to every good work that we should be fully persuaded of the Divine approval and co-operation. Certainly, if the work is good, we may know that it has the Divine approval; but in proportion as it is arduous, we naturally stand in need of more than this. We want the distinct consciousness of Divine co-operation, and oftentimes in the annals of those who have worked for God this has been vouchsafed. It was when Paul was a prisoner in the castle of Antonia that the Lord stood by him at night, and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." And thus it was in the case of Gideon. When he was about to strike the critical blow for the deliverance of his country, he said unto God, "If thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece

only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said." There is nothing on the face of the narrative to enable us to judge whether in Gideon's request belief or unbelief predominated. We can only suppose that the issue shews conclusively that it was the prayer of faith asking for the increase of faith, for otherwise we may infer that it would have been rejected. The only question is, how far we may conceive that, in granting the request of Gideon, it was the Divine intention to combine with the answer to it typical instruction for after ages. And this we can only decide by comparing the signs given with the known subsequent dealings of the Almighty. Then it will be sufficiently obvious that a clear correspondence will be traceable; although, of course, to decide how far this correspondence was comprehended within the limits of the Divine intention can only be a matter for the inference of faith. The first condition imposed by Gideon was analogous to the position of himself and his people. In all ages of the world might has been liable to pass for right. The seven years' oppression of the Midianites had doubtless the tendency to make Israel feel less confident in the national relation to God. As far as God was identified with good fortune, which is the special temptation with which good fortune always comes charged, it might have been thought that God was on the side of Midian,—that Israel was no nearer or dearer to him than Midian. If this were really so, then there was an end to all the special significance of the past dealings of God with Israel. They had

implied nothing and testified to nothing. Though Gideon may not have intended or thought of this, the very teaching of the sign he asked for was to shew that the gracious dew of the Divine election rested alone on Israel, whatever the outward features of the nation were. The strong arm of power was with Midian, and it was wielded to the oppression of God's people; but that by no means belied his past dealings with them. To them "pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." As regards all these special tokens of the Divine power all the earth around was destitute. As yet the dew had not fallen there. This is simply a matter of fact which cannot be controverted if we accept the Divine mission of Israel for the education of the world. And even if we do not accept that, it still remains a phenomenon of history for which we have to account, that the special characteristics of the history and literature of Israel are essentially distinct from those of the rest of mankind. Where at this early age, in the fifth century before the first Olympiad (776 B.C.) and the foundation of Rome, will you find in the annals of any people such simple trust in the providence of God, such childlike reliance on his power and his will, as are found in the story of Gideon? Nay, where is the people that have the annals to shew? We shall search in vain on the monuments of Egypt, or amid the brick records of Babylonia, for any like knowledge of God, even if we declare that knowledge false, as it is found in the records of Israel; so that, as a matter of fact, while the dew of Divine

grace lay thick on Israel, the face of all the earth besides was dry. That such an application is, at all events, not unbiblical is seen at once by reference to the seventy-second Psalm, where it is especially said, with regard to the Son of David, that He shall come down like rain upon a *fleece* (the masculine form of the same word that is used here in Judges). The spiritual influence of the future king is declared by the Psalmist to be like that of rain or dew upon a fleece, or, as the Authorized Version has it, upon the mown grass. Whether or not, therefore, we decide that this was the meaning which God intended the sign to have, at all events it is one which is alike consistent with the language of Scripture and with the obvious facts of history.

It remains, however, to consider the second sign vouchsafed to Gideon. It was just possible that the moisture in the fleece was due to some accidental cause, and not intended as an answer to the prayer of Gideon. We, in reading the narrative, have clearly no room to think so; but if we put ourselves in the place of Gideon, we shall assuredly feel that the doubt was by no means an unnatural or an unreasonable one. Certainly, if there is any truth in the faith that lives in honest doubt, we must acknowledge that Gideon was justified in his hesitation, so far as it was really hesitation, and not rather faith, asking for the missing link of sufficient evidence. At all events, here again the issue justified him. Following the memorable example of Abraham when interceding for Sodom, he said unto God, "Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once

with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground." The second answer was conclusive: here at least there could be no room for accident. It is beyond the possibility of chance that such a result following a prayer so framed could be other than an answer to the prayer. Only concede the incidents, and the significance of them was unquestionable. The language in which they speak is as distinct and unambiguous in our days as it was three thousand years ago. And of their effect then the history gives the clearest evidence in the sequel, when, as the immediate consequence, it tells us that with three hundred men the multitudinous hosts of Midian were put to flight and smitten.

But was there nothing in the giving of this sign, and in the narrative which preserved the memory of it, which was intended, not only to confirm the faith of Gideon, but yet further to instruct the future generations of mankind? Was there not a lesson hidden there which Gideon could not learn, which time only could unfold, but which the course of history should make too plain to be lightly put aside? If the condition of Israel then was shadowed forth by the moisture in the fleece which had left the earth dry, what shall we say to the condition of Israel when the full purposes of God in his dealings with that nation had been declared, and they had rejected Him for whom alone their nation had been signally blest, and for whose advent it had been specially prepared? Here, again, without venturing

to penetrate too deeply into the secret counsels of the Most High, we cannot but acknowledge the patent historical fact that, while the rest of mankind and all the nations of the earth have actually and potentially entered into the promises and blessings of Israel and been enriched with the dews of Zion, Israel alone of all the nations has been excluded as an outcast. Whatever the true explanation of this fact may be, the fact itself is one of the most obvious in history. It is, of course, open to the philosophy of modern days to put its own interpretation upon these phenomena; but as long as they are what they are, and as long as the world lasts they can never be other than they are, it will also be open to believing criticism to point to their extraordinary significance and to draw its own conclusions from them. It does not seem to be an unfair application of the principles of allegory to ask whether it may not have been within the compass of the Holy Spirit's intention to shadow forth to the world, as in a glass, in these two incidents in the history of Gideon, the past and future history of the chosen people? At one time the sole possessors of the truth of God, they were the depositories of that truth, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the world; and when they had proved themselves unworthy of, and unfaithful to, their high trust, they were still to remain, in their past history and their present unbelief, a standing monument of witness to the truth of God, the significance of which could never pass away or become less, while all the world was in possession of their spiritual treasures and they themselves deprived of them. STANLEY LEATHES.

BRIEF NOTES ON PASSAGES OF THE GOSPELS.

I. ON PURGING ALL MEATS.

(*St. Mark* vii. 19.)

THIS verse has long presented a serious difficulty, both grammatical and exegetical. I hope in this paper to establish and popularize the true reading and the true interpretation which, though they were familiar to the most learned of the Fathers, and were pointed out and elaborately defended nearly forty years ago by the Rev. F. Field,[1] have, up to this time, failed to attract the attention they deserve. The true reading, *καθαρίζων*, is indeed adopted by Tischendorf, Alford, &c.; but the most valuable solution of the difficulty caused by that reading has fallen into such complete neglect that there is not a single modern commentary on the New Testament in which I have been able to find the remotest allusion to it.[2] I have, indeed, myself referred to it as an excellent interpretation in a note to my "Life of Christ;"[3] but I had not then arrived at my present conviction, that it is not only a *tenable*, but, in all probability, *the only correct* interpretation, and one which elevates those particular words from a superfluous and unmeaning addition to a sense which gives them an almost unique importance in the history of Christian progress.

1. One of the many efforts of the Pharisees to discredit the ministry of Christ and to throw contempt on his disciples had been founded on an

[1] In his "S. Joannis Chrysostimi Homiliæ in Matthaeus," vol. iii. p. 112.

[2] It is not referred to in the "Critici Sacri," Bengel, Meyer, Alford, Wordsworth, Lange, &c.

[3] Vol. i. p. 449.

incident of which the special details are not recorded. On some occasion—probably at one of the many slight mid-day meals to which Jesus and his immediate followers were invited in the busy course of his Galilean work—the disciples, in the hurry and pressure of their duties, had neglected the tradition of the elders by sitting down "with profane, that is, with unwashed hands." Although the frequent and minute rules of ablution which occupy so large a part of the Sixth *Seder* of the Talmud have no foundation whatever in the Law of Moses, they were insisted upon with extreme urgency and endless regulations in the oral law. Instead, therefore, of answering the particular charge of these Pharisaic critics, Jesus went to the very heart of the matter under dispute by exposing the immorality, and utterly setting at nought the claims, of that tradition of the Scribes which, in myriads of external rules, had invaded the province and eaten away the very heart of true religion. If, as we have good reason to suppose, the unwritten law of that day was at all coincident in form and tendency with the precepts of the Mishnah, our Lord might have selected numberless other instances in which both the letter and the spirit of the Mosaic legislation were violated and abolished by the comments of the Scribes.[1] The instance which He did select was that of immoral vows—like the vow involved in the Corban—which enriched the Temple treasury at the expense of filial affection. It is very probable that this was not the

[1] For a few specimens of these, see the author's "Life of Christ," vol. i. p. 449, *seq*, and the Excursuses on the Talmud and on the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

only proof which He furnished of the hollowness and danger of the *Torah shebeal pîh*, or "law upon the lips;" but even if He instanced this alone, it was sufficient to discredit the whole system of the "tradition of the Elders" by shewing that rules which opposed the very letter of the Decalogue and obliterated the earliest obligations of moral duty, could not even be authoritative, much less divine. And He ended his indignant expostulation against these saintly spies from Jerusalem by applying to them the stern language of the prophet who, so many centuries before, had warned the Jewish nation against the danger of substituting formalism for spirituality, the honour of the lips for the devotion of the life.

2. And then, as though He deigned no further lesson to men whose motives were base and their whole system hypocritical, He called to him the multitude, and in solemn words bade them hearken to one brief principle which laid the axe at the root of that whole system which was to the Scribes and Pharisees of that day their very breath of life. No part of the Rabbinic teaching was more exclusive and universal, no set of regulations was more elaborate and more wide-reaching in their significance, than those which had exaggerated the simple Mosaic distinction between clean and unclean meats into hundreds of petty and minute directions, such as, to a Jew living out of Judea, made life a burden and entangled the simplest acts of daily routine in an iron network of intricate subtleties. The whole of this system, and all that it involved, our Lord at once swept away by the enunciation of the one

broad spiritual principle that man is defiled, not by the *external*, but by the *internal;* that *Levitical* uncleanness, when compared with *moral* uncleanness, was of infinitesimally small importance; that, in the nature of things, and apart from mere ceremonial and sanitary arrangements, it was of extremely little consequence whether or not a man swallowed an animalcule or ate of the flesh of some animal which did not quite divide the hoof; but that it *was* of divine and infinite importance whether his heart was "a sanctuary or a sewer,"—a sweet fountain of love and purity, or a black and turbid vent of sensuality, deceit, and hate.

3. The Pharisees were naturally offended that the multitude, over whom their authority had been hitherto supreme and unquestioned, should thus be bidden to give solemn heed to a truth which cleared away and flung to the winds in one sweep the cobwebs of oral tradition which they and their fathers had been spinning for ages between every line and letter of the written law. The Apostles, not yet by any means emancipated from the feeling of reverence which they, and all such "people of the earth," as their rulers called them, had ever paid to the learned and priestly class, told Jesus, not without anxiety, of the anger which his words had kindled. His answer was an appeal from the judgment of men to the judgment of God and a prophecy that the vaunted wisdom of an ignorance which gave itself the airs of knowledge and the vaunted power of guidance possessed by a blindness which pretended to be sight, would soon and suddenly end in shameful fall.

4. But so new and strange was the doctrine which He had uttered that Peter could only call it "a parable," and join his brethren in asking some further explanation of its bearing. With a gentle expression of surprise and sorrow at their want of spiritual perception, Jesus put in plainer words the truth which He had indicated: "Do ye not perceive, that everything which from without entereth into a man, *cannot* defile him; because it entereth not into the heart, but into his belly, and passeth out into the draught,—cleansing all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of a man, that defileth a man; for from within, from the heart of men, come forth evil thoughts"—evil thoughts, like the letting out of water, and then all that black dark catalogue of the sins that are foulest and vilest in the life of man. These are the only real defilements, and all these come from within.

5. The latter verse is clear, and the derivation of all iniquity from within, and the tracing of every form of moral corruption to evil thoughts, is full of the profoundest meaning. But it is with the former verse that we have to do; and, when its true purport is vindicated, we shall see that it is no mere illustration and amplification, but that it, too, has a deep historic significance.

It has generally been taken to be nothing more than a statement of the fact that what enters a man from without does but affect his material structure, and in no way touches his real being; and this, of course, is perfectly true. But, then, what is the meaning of the apparently dubious and superfluous words with which it concludes,—"because they do

not enter into the heart, but into the belly, and pass out into the draught, *cleansing all meats*"?

6. First, what is the reading?

i. Many editors, driven by their perplexity into rebellion against clear MSS. authority, have accepted and argued in favour of the reading, καθάριζον, which they interpret to mean "*a process* which purges all food." The construction is then sufficiently harsh, though it may be paralleled by the Greek of 2 Tim. ii. 14, and by the occasional idiom which places a neuter participle in apposition to an entire sentence. But even when we have thus supported the construction, the passage gives at the best a very poor and questionable statement, and it is impossible not to feel that it would not have been worth while to add a remark which only confuses the true moral sense of a very memorable utterance by a piece of alien and disputable physiology.

ii. Besides all which, the reading is quite unquestionably *wrong*, for the *masculine* καθαριζων, not the neuter, is the reading of every single uncial manuscript worth noticing, except the Codex Bezæ. It is found in ℵ.A.B.E.F.G.H., &c., *i.e.*, in the *Sinaiticus*, the *Alexandrine*, the *Vatican*, the *Codex Ephraemi*, the *Codex Augiensis*, &c., as well as in Origen and Chrysostom. It would require a reason overwhelmingly strong to set aside such "diplomatic" evidence as this, especially when by doing so we still have a difficult construction and a valueless sense. No editor who wishes to preserve his reputation for critical acumen ought ever again to admit καθάριζον into his text.

7. What, then, can the true reading, καθαρίζων, mean?

a. The only possible *construction* of the word, taking the ordinary punctuation, will be to make it agree with *ἀφεδρών*; and if this be adopted we shall again have a very hard and almost unparalleled instance of apposition, which leaves us still with a very dubious sense, only furnishing us with a remark which can hardly be said to be physically true, and which, even if it be physically true is wholly otiose, and adds nothing whatever to the solemn subject of which the passage treats.

b. Moreover — and this is a point which I have not before seen noticed — this construction and this explanation require us to give to *ἀφεδρών* the sense of "duct," or "alimentary canal," which I do not believe it *can* have. In the LXX. the word does not occur at all, and therefore we are driven to classical Greek if we want to discover its meaning. Now in classical Greek the word is very rare, but is said positively to mean "drain," *cloaca*, *latrina*. If Suidas *also* gives it the meaning assigned to it in our English Version, he does so, in all probability, from a misapprehension of this very passage. Now if, as I believe, our Version has mistranslated the word *ἀφεδρών*, all possible ground for the only interpretation ever offered in modern times is cut away, and the argument in favour of the view which I proceed to give is greatly strengthened. For, indeed, if no *other* explanation were forthcoming, it is so certain that no word uttered by Him could be idle or valueless, that we could only suppose that the exact words of Christ had in this instance been incorrectly reported or inadequately understood.

c. How very different does the case become;—how rich and weighty is the meaning;—what a flood of light do the words throw on the relation of the Gospel to the Law;—how completely are they elevated into one of the most remarkable passages which the Gospels contain on the relation which the Mosaic system was to bear to Gentile Christianity;—how triumphant a vindication do they furnish of the doctrine of St. Paul against the early Judaizers,—when they are rightly read and interpreted! And the right interpretation is as follows,—"And he saith to them, Do ye not perceive that all which from without entereth into a man[1] cannot defile him, because it entereth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out into the drain?"—(this He said), "MAKING ALL MEATS PURE."

d. It will be seen that, according to this view, which I now regard as certain, the last words *are not those uttered by Christ at all, but are the remark of the Evangelist;* of that Evangelist who was the "son" and "interpreter" of St. Peter; of that Evangelist who is believed to reflect the immediate narrative of the Apostle of the Circumcision; of that Evangelist who, before he penned the sacred record, must often have heard from the lips of Peter himself the memorable narrative of that vision on the roof-top at Joppa, when he saw the great sheet let down from heaven full of clean and unclean beasts, and, on being bidden to "slay and eat," had answered, "Not so, Lord, for never at any time did I eat anything common or unclean." And the voice again, the second time, said to him (using *the two*

[1] I take the article here to be generic.

very words which are most prominent in this passage, namely, κοινὸς and καθαρίζω), "What God *cleansed* (ἐκαθάρισε), call not thou common." I cannot feel the slightest remaining doubt that it was in the light of that vision that Peter first understood the richest and widest significance of these words; that not until his notions of the preponderant importance of Levitical distinctions had been divinely removed, was he able to inform St. Mark what was the real and full meaning of the "parable" of that which cometh from within and without,—of which the first does, and the second does not, defile. It seems to me that, but for the Voice of Joppa, Peter might never have *clearly* understood that this remark, which he had himself asked Jesus to explain, was the most significant of the few utterances in which his Lord had indicated the transitory nature of that Mosaic system which He only came to destroy in the sense that He came to furnish its final interpretation and to replace its shadow by the eternal substance.

8. It is only with the actual meaning of the words that I am here concerned, not with their immense importance. That meaning was rightly apprehended by Origen, the most learned, and by Chrysostom, the most eloquent, of the Fathers. The latter, in his homily on St. Matthew, observes: "But Mark says that he said these things (καθαρίζων τὰ βρώματα) *making* (*all*) *meats pure;*" and Dean Burgon, in his treatise on the last twelve verses of St. Mark (p. 179) adduces another passage to the same effect from Gregory Thaumaturgus, who has this remark: "And the *Saviour, who purifies all meats*, says," &c.

For these references I am indebted to a kind letter from Mr. Field, who also removes the stumbling-block to the adoption of this lofty interpretation, which I had pointed out in my "Life of Christ." That stumbling-block is *the order of the words*, since "purifying all meats" is inserted, as it were, parenthetically between the two clauses of our Lord's discourse. But, as Mr. Field points out to me, it is quite in St. Mark's manner to throw in an observation of his own upon something that had been said by Christ. There is a remarkable instance of this in Mark iii. 29, 30. There we have, "And calling them, he said to them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?" Then follows a long speech consisting of three distinct propositions, and, after this interruption, the construction is resumed in verse 30, "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." Here also — though it is not so necessary as in the verses which I have been examining — we might render (*this He said*), "because they said, He hath a devil."

What are the arguments with which Mr. Field, in his note on St. Chrysostom, supports this most valuable explanation — which is in reality that of the most learned ancient Expositors, and has only lain for so many centuries unnoticed because, in explaining a difficult passage of St. Mark, no one thought of consulting St. Chrysostom's commentary on St. Matthew — I do not know, because I have been unable to procure his book. I have, therefore, preferred to state what occurred to myself in its support; and I expect that what is here adduced will be as new as, I hope, it will be convincing to those who read it. When I alluded to this explana-

tion in my "Life of Christ," I did not mention, because I did not know, who had won the credit of originating or reviving it, having myself heard it suggested in conversation by a learned bishop. Mr. Field has removed the only objection I ever felt to admitting it, and I cannot but think that it will rank hereafter with the most certain and valuable results which modern has borrowed from ancient exegesis.

F. W. FARRAR.

NOTES ON COMMENTARIES.

2. Job to Solomon's Song.

In the age of Solomon a new kind of literature sprang into being among the Hebrews, or at least rose to its highest excellence, noble specimens of which have come down to us in the books which they called collectively *Chokmah*, the literature of *Wisdom*. Poetic in form, it is ethical or didactic in spirit, and sets itself to depict, in various forms, the art of living rightly or well. Thus the Book of Job teaches men how to *suffer*, the Book of Psalms how to *pray*, the Book of Proverbs how to *act*, the Book Ecclesiastes how to *enjoy*, and the Song which is Solomon's how to *love*.

These books have been far more fortunate in their Commentators than the historical books; there is hardly one of them on which even the English school has not furnished a valuable, or even an invaluable, exposition. The very first of them is exceptionally fortunate. The Book of *Job* is probably the most sublime poem in the literature of the world. The questions it handles—as, *e.g.*, the capacity of man for a disinterested virtue, a genuine and unselfish piety; the origin, function, and end of evil—are of profound and perennial interest, and it raises and answers them in the noblest way. No wonder, therefore, that it has attracted to itself the best and ablest minds. In the foreign school Renan and Ewald, Dillmann and Merx, are among the Commentators who have laboured at it most successfully; among ourselves Professor A. B. Davidson and Canon Cook. Davidson's Commentary[1]—alas, that it should still be incomplete!—is indeed a quite unique bit of work. It combines philosophical breadth and spiritual in-

[1] A Commentary, Grammatical and Exegetical, on the Book of Job: with a Translation. By the Rev. A. B. Davidson, M.A. Vol. I. Williams and Norgate.

sight with exegetical power and a careful and exhaustive examination of the grammatical constructions of the book in an altogether singular degree. To the student of Hebrew it is invaluable, since it takes up every question of grammar, from the simplest to the most difficult, and gives a plain straightforward solution of them. And even those who have no acquaintance with Hebrew will be charmed by the erudition which yields an easy explanation of the historical, geographical, astrological, and other allusions of the poem, and the subtle and penetrative power with which its moral problems are handled. I should find it hard to name a finer specimen of English exposition. And yet, I hardly know why, it is not by simply reading this Commentary that we discover its excellence: *that* discovers itself only to those who *work* with it: but no man, I think, can set himself to study and expound the Poem without finding that he gets more real and valuable help—help too of all kinds—from Professor Davidson's Commentary than from any other within his reach. There is wit in it and humour as well as philosophy and learning; and though at times the style is somewhat awkward and heavy, at other times the book is as admirable in form as it is in substance. It abounds in happy thoughts happily expressed. Professor Davidson should be debarred from all other work till he has completed this. At present it extends only to the close of Chap. xiv.

Canon Cook's Commentary on Job[1] is by far the most admirable popular exposition of the Book I know. The introductory essay on the contents, object, integrity, character, language, style, and date of the poem will be very welcome and instructive even to scholars; while yet it is written in a style so terse and telling that any reader of intelligence may follow it throughout, and can hardly fail to be charmed by it. The notes are brief, yet sufficient both to explain the numerous allusions to the science, customs, &c., of various ancient races with which the Book abounds, and the main course of the argument between Job and his three friends: they are all, moreover, carefully brought within the range of the general reader.

Delitzsch's Biblical Commentary on the *Book of Job*[2] shews that learned and devout author at his very best, and is greatly enhanced in value by the illustrative notes contributed by Dr. Wetzstein, who, for many years the Prussian Consul at Damascus,

[1] See Vol. IV. of "The Speaker's Commentary." John Murray.
[2] Two Volumes, published by T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh.

made himself familiar on the spot with the scenery, customs, and traditions of the Hauran. Possessed of these three Commentaries, if only he know how to use them, the English student will find himself sufficiently equipped for the study of this noble and inspired poem.

On the *Book of Psalms* endless Commentaries have been written, many of them of great worth to those who crave homiletical and devotional comments on those sacred hymns, which yet have little worth to the student who aspires, first of all, to get at the original meaning and intention of the Psalmists; others, while affecting to be only or mainly critical, of no real value either to those who desire to acquaint themselves with the historical conditions under which the several psalms were written and their grammatical sense, or of those who desire to find nutriment for their spiritual life. Among the former I should class Mr. Spurgeon's "Treasury of David," which really contains most of the finest things that have been said for eighteen centuries about the Psalms; and among the latter a little book published by Macmillan some years since, and entitled, "The Psalms Chronologically Arranged, by Four Friends," which, despite its popularity, is as poor in its criticism as it is unsound in its chronology. The one English book on the Psalter of the first class is Canon Perowne's.[1] It combines sound learning with genuine expository power, and should be in the hands of all who intend to study or expound this unparalleled collection of sacred lyrics. The Hebrew student will find many notes that will aid him in his study: but these may be skipped by the English reader —as a rule, indeed, they stand apart in a place by themselves; so that no man of intelligence, however unlearned, need fear to get even the larger edition, or doubt that he may use it to advantage. A smaller edition of this important work has been lately issued, in a cheap form, expressly for the use of those English students who have no language but their own. It is an admirable condensation; the expository notes are all that could be desired: the one drawback to it is, that considerations of space have compelled the author to omit the valuable essay prefixed to the larger edition.

EDITOR.

(*To be continued.*)

[1] "The Book of Psalms. A New Translation, with Introductions and Notes, Explanatory and Critical." By J. J. Stewart Perowne, B.D. Vols. I. and II. Bell and Daldy.

THE EXPOSITOR.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

MATT. iv. 1–11 ; MARK i. 12, 13 ; LUKE iv. 1–13.

How is the Temptation of Christ to be understood? As a history, a parable, a myth, or an undesigned, though not accidental, compound of the three? If real, was its reality actual, a veritable face-to-face struggle of opposed persons, with personalities no less real that they represented universal interests, and, by their conflict, determined universal issues? Or was its reality ideal, subjective, a contest of rival passions, principles, and aims? If not real, whence came the narrative? From Jesus or his disciples, or, in a manner more or less unconscious, partly from both? Did He clothe a general truth or a mental experience in the drapery of historical narrative? Or did they mistake a parable for history? Or, with imaginations dazzled by his person and transfigured by his words and works, did they either simply create or expand from a small germ this, while mythical, symbolical and ideally true tale of the struggle of celestial light and strength with infernal darkness and subtlety?

These questions confront us the moment we attempt to understand the story of the Temptation.

It has been interpreted by a rigid realism, which, unable to conceive any except a formal and apparent reality, has bravely embodied the Devil, and introduced him, now as a venerable sage, now as a friend, and again as a member of the Sanhedrin, or a high priest; or, as Bengel naïvely thinks, "Sub schemate γραμματέως, quia τὸ γέγραπται ei ter opponitur." Since Origen, an idealism, more or less free, has resolved the Temptation, either in whole or in part, into a vision, now caused by the Devil, now by God, and now by the ecstatic state of Christ's own spirit. Within our own century Schleiermacher has explained it as a misunderstood parable; Strauss, as a pure myth; De Wette, as the expansion of an historical germ; and subsequent scholars have variously combined these with each other or with the older views. If variously interpreted means well interpreted, then certainly our narrative may be said to stand here pre-eminent. But, at least, the variety indicates the strength of the desire and the determination to understand it, and of the belief that within it are truths worth knowing, and certain, when known, to increase our knowledge of Christ.

It is manifestly impossible within our present limits to discuss the many critical and exegetical problems involved in the questions just stated. Nor is it, for our present purpose, necessary to do so. Our design is to approach the subject from what may be termed the personal or biographical side, and from the standpoint thus gained make an attempt to understand the narrative.

Let us begin, then, with what ought to be a self-evident proposition. As Jesus was a moral being,

whose nature had to develop under the limitations necessary to humanity, we must conceive Him as a subject of moral probation. He could not escape exposure to its perils. "It behoved him in all things to be like unto his brethren," and so to be "in all things tempted as they are." He obeyed by choice, not by necessity; his obedience was conscious and voluntary, not instinctive and natural. It might be from the first and at every moment certain that He would achieve holiness, but could never be necessary. He could have been above the possibility of doing wrong only by being without the ability to do right. Obedience can be where disobedience may be, and nowhere else. God is too high to be tempted. He neither obeys nor disobeys, but acts wisely or righteously. We cannot say, "He is sinless," must say, "He is holy." We speak of Him in words that imply He cannot err or fall, not in words that imply He may. A brute may be provoked, but cannot be tempted. It is too low, is beneath temptation, and so we think of it as neither sinful, nor sinless, nor holy, but simply as natural—an unmoral creature. But man can be tempted, is a being capable of obedience, capable of disobedience, limited in knowledge, free in will. And Jesus as Son of Man was the true child of humanity, an universal ideal man, wanting in no quality essential to manhood. He had a free will, an intellect which grew in capacity and culture, knowledge now more, now less, imperfect. Limitation, Leibnitz notwithstanding, is no physical evil, and imperfection no moral wrong, but they involve possible error in thought and possible sin in action. Hence Jesus was, by the very terms of his being,

temptable. Where life is realized within the conditions of humanity there must be probation, and probation is only possible in a person who can be proved.

But, again, we must here conceive the temptable as the tempted. In the person and life of Jesus there was no seeming. A drama where the face within the mask is placid, where the voice is outside the soul, where the person but personates an idea, is not to be here thought of. Now, a real humanity cannot escape with a fictitious temptation. Where sin is universal, it cannot but be a greater and subtler force than were it embodied in a single being, more difficult to detect, less easy to resist. Every man becomes then, in a sense, an agent,—one in whom it has a foothold and through whom it works. Hence, Christ's struggle against sin could not but be persistent; the battle extended along the whole line of his life, and became a victory only by his death. And so, though our narrative may be termed by pre-eminence The Temptation, it was not simply then, but always, that Jesus was tempted. The devil left Him only "for a season;" returned personified now as Peter, now as Judas, and again as the Jews; met Him amid the solitude and agony of Gethsemane, in the clamour, mockery, and desertion of the cross. And so Milton's grand picture of the "patient Son of God" represents, not one moment, but every moment, in his glorious but perilous career:

> "Infernal hosts and hellish furies round
> Environed Thee. Some howled, some yelled, some shrieked,
> Some bent at Thee their fiery darts, while Thou
> Satt'st unappall'd in calm and sinless peace."

But this very word "sinless" starts another set of questions. How could Jesus be "tempted in

all things, like as we are, yet without sin"? Is not temptation evil? Can a tempted soul be still a sinless soul? If a man becomes conscious of sin, though only to resist it, does he not lose the beautiful innocence, the white and sweet simplicity of spirit, that is, as it were, the heart of holiness? We must then consider how the tempted could be the sinless Christ. And,—

1. What is Temptation? Seduction to evil, solicitation to wrong. It stands distinguished from trial thus: trial tests, seeks to discover the man's moral qualities or character; but temptation persuades to evil, deludes, that it may ruin. The one means to undeceive, the other to deceive. The one aims at the man's good, making him conscious of his true moral self; but the other at his evil, leading him more or less unconsciously into sin. God tries; Satan tempts. Abraham was tried when his faith was proved, Job when successive calamities made it manifest that he served God for nothing save the duty of the service and the glory of the Served; but Eve was tempted when persuaded to sin by the promise of becoming a god; David when, blinded and enticed by lustful desire, he plunged into the crimes that were so terribly punished and so grandly confessed and lamented. And so here emerges another distinction—in trial the issues are made fairly apparent, in temptation they are concealed. Evil in the one case is, in the other is not, disguised. The wrong seems to the tempted the desirable, and the extent to which the desirable hides the wrong measures the strength of the temptation. And so there needs

to be adaptation between means and end. What tempts one mind may only offend another. Some men are too coarse to perceive the finer forms of evil; others so refined as to be shocked by the grosser sins. Mephistopheles is one being to Faust, another to Margaret, and even to the Scholar he is inflexibly accommodating, full of changes to suit the many phases of the mind he leads. And so the tempted is the solicited to evil by evil, but by evil so disguised as to be winsome, as, if possible, to make desire victorious over conscience and will.

2. The Forms of Temptation. It may be either sensuous, imaginative, or rational, *i.e.*, a man may be tempted through the senses, the imagination, or the reason. If through the senses, then it appeals to greed, appetite, lust, or any one of the passions that bestialize man and create our grosser miseries and crimes. If through the imagination, then it dazzles to betray, comes as pride, ambition, or any one of the graceful and gracious forms that can be made to veil vain-glorious, though protean, egotism. If through the reason, then it comes as doubt of the the true, suspicion of the good, or in any of the many forms in which intellect protests against the limits it so wishes, and yet is so little able, to transcend. Temptation may thus assume shapes akin to the highest as to the lowest in man, but the forms most distinct often subtly meet and blend. Perhaps it is never so powerful as when its forces approach the mind together and at once through the senses, the imagination, and the reason.

3. The Sources of Temptation. It may proceed

either (1) from self, or (2) from without self. If the first, the nature must be bad, but not of necessity radically bad; if the second, it may be innocent, but must be capable of sinning and being induced, or drawn, to a given sin. A thoroughly bad being may tempt, but cannot be tempted. The nature has become essentially evil, and so sin is natural. A sinless being may be tempted, but cannot tempt—even himself. Where inclination and will, conscience and passion, are in harmony, there can be no lust to entice or evil tendency to beset and ensnare. A being of mixed qualities and character can both tempt and be tempted, his baser can tempt his better nature, a worse creature can seduce him to deeper sin.

Now it is evident that temptation from within is a confession of sinfulness, the endeavour of depravity to become still more depraved. The self-tempted can never be the sinless. Tendencies that solicit to evil are evil tendencies. The Hunchback King, as conceived by Shakespeare and represented in the most tragic of his historical plays, is a man drunk with ambition, made by it false, perfidious, cruel. He knew that murder was a crime, eminently so where the murdered stood related to him as did the little orphans in the Tower, who seemed so beautiful and strong in their helplessness to the hired and hardened villains who saw them—

> "Girdling one another
> Within their innocent alabaster arms;
> Their lips like four red roses on a stalk,
> Which, in their summer beauty, kiss'd each other."

But where the ruffians had pity, Richard had none. Ambition had vanquished pity and, for the time

being, seared conscience. His worse triumphed over his better nature. The temptation came from himself, and so condemned himself. The nature that produced it was bad, and its victory made the nature worse. The ability to tempt implies sinfulness, is impossible without it.

If now, the temptation comes from without, three things are possible—it may speak either (1) to still fluid evil desires, and make them crystallize into evil action; or (2) to innocence, and change it into guilt; or (3) supply it with the opportunity of rising into holiness. A word or two illustrative of these three possibilities. The Macbeth, not of history, but of the drama, may stand as an illustration of the first. He is a man full of ambition, but also

> "Too full o' the milk of human kindness
> To catch the nearest way."

He would be great, but guiltlessly; what he would highly, that would he holily:

> "Would not play false,
> And yet would wrongly win."

And this man has a queen, with his ambition, without his scruples, strong, passionful, pitiless; and she, unsexed, filled, from crown to toe, top-full of direst cruelty, becomes the temptress, works upon her husband, now on his strength, now on his weakness, till he goes to his fatal crime and still more fatal remorse. There is evil beforehand in both, evil irresolute desires in the man, evil resolution in the woman, and the strength forces the weakness to incarnate itself in deeds conscience will not let die.

The second possibility — temptation coming to innocence and changing it into guilt — we may find

illustrated in the splendid scene in "King John," where the King says to Hubert,—

> "If the midnight bell
> Did, with his iron tongue and brazen mouth,
> Sound one into the drowsy ear of night;
> If this same were a churchyard where we stand,
> And thou possessed with a thousand wrongs,"

if, indeed, Hubert could see without eyes, hear without ears, reply without a tongue, the King would, "in despite of brooded watchful day," have poured into his bosom the thoughts that filled his own. The word murder remains unspoken, but the thing is suggested. By voice and look and fawning flattering speech, the honest tender-hearted Hubert is betrayed into a promise against the life of the boy he loved. And so the tempted falls, the innocent is made the guilty.

The third possibility—innocence raised through temptation into holiness—is, perhaps, nowhere better illustrated than in the beautiful creation which, like the genius of chastity and all that is winsome in woman, has been, as it were, enshrined in "Measure for Measure," the play that so well expounds its own saying,—

> 'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
> Another thing to fall."

Isabella, lovely as pure, most womanly in her unconscious strength, stainless among the stained, loving her doomed brother too well to sin for him, triumphs over his tears and entreaties, the wiles and threats of the Deputy, and emerges from her great temptation chaster, more beautiful in the blossom of her perfect womanhood, than she had been before.

The fierce fire refined, and what issued from it was a being purified, not simply innocent, but righteous, clothed in the invisible but impenetrable armour of sweet and conscious simplicity.

We are now in a position to consider the Temptation of Christ in relation to his sinlessness. Temptation implies (1) ability in the tempted to sin or not sin. Jesus had, to speak with the schoolmen, the "posse non peccare," not the "non posse peccare." Had He possessed the latter, He had been intemptable. (2) Evil must be presented to the tempted in a manner disguised, plausible, attractive. It was so to Jesus. When He was hungry, it was sensuous in its form; when He stood on the Temple tower, whether in body or in vision it matters not, it was imaginative; when He was offered the kingdoms of the world if He would worship Satan, it was rational. Each temptation appealed to a subjective desire or need. (3) The tempter must be sinful, the tempted may be innocent. And Christ was the tempted. The temptation came to Him, did not proceed from Him, yet performed a high and necessary function in his personal and official discipline. Whether the innocent become righteous or guilty, holy or depraved, temptation alone can reveal. The untried is a negative character, can become positive only through trial. Till every link in the chain that is to hold the vessel to its anchor be tested, you cannot be certain that it is of adequate strength. Till the bridge over which myriads are to sweep in the swift-rushing train be proved of sufficient strength, you cannot regard it as a safe pathway. So, till the will has been solicited to the

utmost to evil, its fidelity to righteousness cannot be held absolute. The way to obedience lies through suffering. The inflexible in morals is what will not bend, however immense and intense the strain. Only a Christ tempted, "yet without sin," could be the perfect Christ. What He endured proved his adequacy for his work; and out of his great trial He emerged, not simply sinless, which He had been before, but righteous,—that most beautiful of objects to the Divine eye and most winsome of beings to the human heart, a perfect man, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

Our discussion conducts, then, to but one conclusion: temptation was not only possible to the sinlessness, but necessary to the holiness, of Christ. Yet this conclusion is but an introduction, only clears the way for the study of what we term the Temptation. And here we may remark that the place where it happened is not without significance. Into what wilderness Jesus was led to be tempted we do not know—whether the wild and lonely solitudes watched by the mountains where Moses and Elijah struggled in prayer and conquered in faith, or the steep rock by the side of the Jordan overlooking the Dead Sea, which later tradition has made the arena of this fell conflict. Enough, the place was a desert, waste, barren, shelterless, overhead the hot sun, underfoot the burning sand or blistering rock. No outbranching trees made a cool restful shade; no spring upbursting with a song of gladness came to relieve the thirst; no flowers bloomed, pleasing the eye with colour and the nostril with fragrance: all

was drear desert. Now, two things may be here noted—the desolation, and the solitude. The heart that loves Nature is strangely open to her influences. The poet sees a glory in the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, which exalts and soothes him; but a land of waste and cheerless gloom casts over his spirit a shadow as of the blackness of darkness. And Jesus had the finest, most sensitive, soul that ever looked through human eyes. He loved this beautiful world, loved the stars that globed themselves in the heaven above, the flowers that bloomed in beauty on the earth beneath, the light and shade that played upon the face of Nature, now brightening it as with the smile of God, now saddening it as with the pity that gleams through a cloud of tears. Think, then, how the desolation must have deepened the shadows on his spirit, increased the burden that made Him almost faint at the opening of his way. And He was in solitude—alone there, without the comfort of a human presence, the fellowship of a kindred soul. Yet the loneliness was a sublime necessity. In his supreme moments society was impossible to Him. The atmosphere that surrounded the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the Agony, and the Cross, He alone could breathe; in it human sympathy slept or died, and human speech could make no sound. Out of loneliness He issued to begin his work; into loneliness He passed to end it. The moments that made his work divinest were his own and his Father's.

But much more significant than the scene of the Temptation is the place where it stands in the history of the life and mind of Jesus. It stands just

after the Baptism, and before the Ministry ; just after the long silence, and before the brief yet eternal speech ; just after the years of privacy, and before the few but glorious months of publicity. Now, consider what this means. The Baptism had made Him manifest as the Messiah. In the Baptist emotions inexpressible had been awakened. His new-born hopes made him a new man, lifted him into the splendid humility which rejoiced to be, like the morning star, quenched in the light of the risen Sun. But John was here a pale reflection of Jesus. The one's emotions were to the other's as "moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine." We must not imagine that every day was the same to Christ, or Christ the same on every day. He had his great moments, as we have. We may call the supreme moment when the soul awakens to God, and the man realizes manhood, conversion, the new birth, or what we please. What the experience we so name signifies to us, the moment symbolized by the Baptism signified to Jesus, only with a difference in degree which his pre-eminence alone can measure. It marked his awakening to all that was involved in Messiahship ; and such an awakening could not come without utmost tumult of spirit—tumult that only the solitude and struggle of the wilderness could calm. The outward expresses the inward change. Before this moment no miracle ; after it the miracles begin and go on multiplying, Before it no speech, no claim of extraordinary mission, only divine and golden silence ; after it the teaching with authority, the founding of the kingdom, the creating of the world's light. Before it the Carpenter of Nazareth,

the son of Joseph and Mary, doing, in beautiful meekness, the common duties of the common day; after it the Christ of God, the Revealer of the Father, the Life and the Light of men. Now, He who became so different to others had first become as different to Himself. What was soon to be revealed to the world was then made manifest to his own soul. And the revelation was dazzling enough to blind, was so brilliant as to need a solitude where the senses, undistracted by society, could be adjusted to the new light and perceive all it unveiled. And so the Spirit, which in that glorious hour possessed Him, drove Him into the wilderness to essay his strength and realize the perfect manhood that was perfect Messiahship.

We must, then, study the Temptation through the consciousness of Jesus. Only by the one can the true significance of the other be revealed. The mind that can for forty days be its own supreme society is a mind full of fellest conflicts. We have seen how much the Baptism signified for Christ, how for Him it had ended an old and inaugurated a new life. Now, observe, in our greatest and most decisive times the Divine and the devilish lie very near each other; supernal and infernal courses both seem so possible as to be almost equal. And the two appear to have been for the moment strangely mingled in the consciousness of Christ. Matthew says "he was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil;" and Mark, "immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness." He was, therefore, the subject at once of Divine possession and demoniac temptation. And the two

were in a manner related, the one involved the other: the first could become perfect only by the defeat of the second. To Him the great moral alternatives came as they had never come to any one before, as they can never come again. The forty days were not all days of temptation—were days of ecstasy and exaltation as well. Sunshine and cloud, light and darkness, fought their eternal battle in and round this soul. When the battle ended, the sunshine and light were found victorious; the cloud and the darkness had to leave the field broken, vanquished, for evermore.

The Temptation and the assumption by Jesus of the Messianic character and office are thus essentially related. The one supplies the other with the condition and occasion of its existence. The office is assailed in and through the person. These, indeed, blend in Jesus. Had He ceased to be the person He was, He had ceased to be the Messiah. Had He not been Jesus, He could not have been the Christ. Hence, had the person been ruined, the office must have perished; or had the office been depraved, the person must have failed in character and in work. The temptations aim at a common end, but by different means, appeal now to Jesus, and, again, to the Christ. When He was driven into the wilderness three points must have stood out from the tumult of thought and feeling pre-eminent. (1) The relation of the supernatural to the natural in Himself; or, on the other side, his relation to God as his ideal human Son. (2) The relation of God to the supernatural in his person, and the official in his mission; and (3) the nature of the

kingdom He had come to found, and the agencies by which it was to live and extend. And these precisely were the issues that emerged in the several temptations. They thus stood rooted in the then consciousness of Christ and related in the most essential way to his spirit. How, and to what extent, a word or two of exposition may make more apparent.

1. The First Temptation. Though in form sensuous, it is in essence moral or spiritual. Observe the language is hypothetical, "*If* thou art the Son of God," and is subtly meant to express real but removable doubt in the mind of the tempter and to insinuate doubt into the mind of the tempted. It says, as it were, on the one side, "You may, or may not, be the Son of God; I cannot tell. Yet I am open to conviction; convince me;" and suggests, on the other, "Your consciousness of Messiahship may be illusive; you may be the victim of the Baptist's enthusiasm and your own imagination; clearly your belief in yourself and your mission is, without some higher warrant, unwarranted." Then the answer to the double doubt was so possible, simple, conclusive, "Command these stones to be made bread!" The temptation was great; had Christ lost faith in Himself, Christianity had never been. It was reasonable, too. Israel had been divinely fed while divinely led. What had been right to the people, need not be wrong to the Son, of God. And where supernatural power was supposed to exist, could it be wrong to test its reality in an act so holy and excellent as the preservation of an imperilled life? But the temptation, though formidable, was vic-

toriously resisted. Christ did not take his life into his own hands; left it in the hands of God.

Now, what constituted this a temptation—where lay its evil? Suppose Christ had commanded the stones to become bread, what then? To Christ, considering the work He had to do, two things were necessary. He had to live his personal life (1) within the limits necessary to man, and (2) in perfect dependence on God. Had He transgressed either of these conditions He had ceased to be man's ideal Brother or God's ideal Son. Man cannot create; he lives by obeying Nature. He has to plough, to sow, to reap, to garner and winnow, to bruise and bake his grain, that he may eat and live. Now, had Christ by a direct miracle fed Himself, He had lifted Himself out of the circle and system of humanity, had annulled the very terms of the nature which made Him one with man. While his supernatural power was his own, it existed not for Himself, but for us. The moment He had stooped to save self He had become disqualified to save men. And He could as little cease to depend on God as to obey Nature. The ideal human life must be perfect in its dependence on God, absolute in its obedience. The ideal Son could not act as if He had no Father. And so his choice was not to be his own Providence, but to leave Himself to the Divine. He conquered by faith, and his first victory was like his last. The taunts He had to hear and bear on the cross—"He saved others, himself he cannot save;" "He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him"—were but a repetition of this earlier temptation; and then, as now, though the agony was

deeper and the darkness more dense, He triumphed by giving Himself into the hands of the Father.

2. The Second Temptation.[1] Here, as before, the opening clause is hypothetical, and suggestive of the same double doubt; but it is proposed to remove it by an exactly opposite act. The first temptation required a miracle of independence; the second requires one of dependence. While that was sensuous, this is imaginative in its form. An act of absolute self-sufficiency was suggested through a subjective need and capacity; an act of absolute faith is suggested through the sublimity of an objective relation and effect. What could better exalt into a divine and fearless ecstasy an imaginative soul, loving God too well to distrust Him, than the thought of a trust so boundless as to believe that the impalpable and yielding air would be made by his hands as safe as the solid earth? or what could better lift into dauntless enthusiasm a mind anxious to regenerate sense-bound men than the vision of a descent into the crowd in the visible arms of Heaven, the manifest supernatural Messenger of the merciful God? The temptation was, on the one side, powerful to a spirit full of generous trust in God; and, on the other, no less powerful to a spirit full of generous designs for man. And it came, too, clothed in the garb of a Divine oracle—"He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Now what was the evil in this suggested act? It

[1] For reasons that cannot be here stated the order of Matthew is followed, rather than Luke's.

was twofold, evil alike on the Godward and on the manward side. In the first aspect it meant that God should be forced to do for Him what He had before refused to do for Himself—make Him an object of supernatural care, exempted from obedience to natural law, a child of miracle, exceptional in his very physical relations to God and Nature. In the second aspect it meant that He was to be a Son of Wonder, clothed in marvels, living a life that struck the senses and dazzled the fancies of the poor vulgar crowd. In the one case it had been fatal to Himself, in the other to his mission. Had He been the Child of a visible Providence, which suspended for his sake every natural and human law, then He had ceased to be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, had never been made perfect through suffering, and so had never become, as "a merciful and faithful High Priest," a sublime object of faith and source of peace. Had He been encircled with wonders, heralded by marvels, then He had led men by sense, not by conscience and reason, had reached them through their lowest and most vulgar, not through their highest and noblest, qualities; and so they could have owed to Him no birth from above, no real spiritual change. Special as were his relations to God He did not presume on these, but, with divine self-command, lived, though the supernatural Son, like the natural Child of the Eternal Father. His human life was as real as it was ideal; the Divine did not supersede the human, nor seek to transcend its limits, physical and spiritual. And his fidelity to our nature has been its most pre-eminent blessing. No man who knows the

Spirit of Christ will presume either on the Providence or the mercy of God, because certain that these remain, even in their highest achievements, the dutiful servants of Divine Wisdom and Righteousness. He who came to shew us the Father shewed Him not as a visible Guardian, not as an arbitrary mechanical Providence, but as an invisible Presence about our spirits, about our ways, source of our holiest thoughts, our tenderest feelings, our wisest actions. The Only-Begotten lived as one of many brethren, though as the only one conscious of his Sonship. And, perhaps, his self-sacrifice reached here its sublimest point. He would not, and He did not, tempt the Lord his God, but lived his beautiful and perfect life within the terms of the human, yet penetrated and possessed by the Divine.

3. The Third Temptation. Here the temptation seems eminently gross. Yet devil-worship can assume many forms, and some of these may be most refined. Worship is homage, and homage to a person, real or supposed, representative of certain principles, modes of action, and aims. What it here means seems evident enough. Jesus is recognized as seeking a kingdom, as intending, indeed, to found one. His aims are confessed to be more than Jewish, not national, but universal, not an extension of Israel, but a comprehension of the world. It is known that his purpose is to be the Messiah, not of the Jews, but of man. The only question is as to the nature of his kinghood and kingdom. The kingdom here offered is one not of the spirit, but "of the world." And "world"

here means not what it may be to the good, but what it is to the bad. It and its kingdoms may be won at once, will be, if Jesus worships the devil, *i.e.*, makes evil his good, uses unholy means to accomplish his ends. It is as if the tempter had said, "Survey the world, and mark what succeeds. Away there in Italy lives and rules the Emperor of the world, a selfish sensual man, whose right is might. Over there in Cæsarea sits his red-handed, yet vacillating, Procurator. In your own Galilee a treacherous and lustful Herod reigns, its deputy lord. Up in Jersusalem are priests and scribes, great in things external, the fierce fanatics of formalism. Everywhere unholy men rule, unholy means prevail. Worldliness holds the world in fee. By it alone can you conquer. Use the means and the men of Cæsar, and your success will be swift and sure. Worship me, and the kingdoms of the world are thine."

The Temptation was subtly adapted to the mood and the moment, and was as evil as subtle. Bad means make bad ends. Good ends do not justify evil means; evil means deprave good ends. So a Messianic kingdom, instituted and established by worldliness, had been a worldly kingdom, no better than the coarse and sensuous Empire of Rome. And Jesus, while He felt the force, saw the evil of the temptation, and vanquished it by the truth on which his own spiritual and eternal city was to be founded, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The three Temptations are thus as essentially related to each other as to the spirit of Jesus.

They are attempts to ruin the kingdom, the first through its King, the second through its God, the third through its means and agents. They are the successive scenes, or acts, of one great drama, where the actors are spiritual, the struggles and triumphs the same. And yet they describe a contest representative and universal. Jesus is here the representative Man, the source and head of the new humanity, the founder of the kingdom that is to be. When He triumphs, it triumphs. When He is victorious, all are victorious that live in and by Him. And his victory, as it was for humanity, was by humanity. The supernatural energies that were in Him He did not use for Himself. In our nature, as in our name, He stood, fought, conquered. How perfectly, then, is He qualified to be at once our Saviour and example! The heart that loves us is a heart that was once strained in a great battle, where the pain was its own and the victory ours. To Him, as He lives and reigns in love and might, we can come in sin and weakness, in joy and sorrow, certain that, as He "suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

II. *SAMUEL AND THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS.*

It was the singular good fortune of Samuel to be the founder both of the monarchy in Israel and also of the Prophetic order. Both had existed in embryo in the institutions of Moses; but now, out of the

chaos which lasted for twenty years after the fall of Eli, the creative genius of this great man called them forth into ampler proportions and established them upon a lasting and solid basis. If the Messiah was to be Prophet, Priest, and King, it was necessary that, as Israel was the type of the militant Church of Christ, all three offices should attain in it to their perfect development. Hitherto there had been the Priest only; now, contemporaneously, King and Prophet appear, and continue their course side by side till the monarchy fell. Nor did prophecy long survive. Its voice was heard in the century which immediately followed the return from exile, and then it was silent. It was the king, not the priest, who was ever confronted by the Prophet. When the kingdom ceased, prophecy had also performed its allotted task.

I am not prepared to say how far Samuel foresaw that the Prophet was to be, politically, the check upon the royal power. It was the happiness of Israel that a special Providence ever watched over its true interests; and, undeniably, the influence of the Prophets over the people confined the power of the kings within reasonable limits. Once only did the kingdom become a tyranny; but before this was possible Manasseh filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and by wholesale executions silenced the prophetic voice. And similarly when, in Israel, Jezebel wished to overthrow the national institutions, she recognized in the Prophets the representatives of freedom, and ruthlessly destroyed them, only to see the monarchy confronted and overmatched by the majesty of Elijah's spiritual power, appealing to a

popular convention assembled at Mount Carmel. Not that this was the primary object for which the Prophets were called into existence. Their business was to keep all Israel, people as well as king, true to the Divine purpose for which they had been made into a nation. But this higher duty contained also the lower. A nation of slaves is a thing too mean to have any noble part assigned to it in the Divine drama of human development.

But, undoubtedly, Samuel did purpose to raise the intellectual condition of Israel. All the weapons of his warfare were, as we have seen, moral. A great general might give the people deliverance from their enemies by a successful battle, but at his death the struggle would begin afresh. The one thing that could make and keep them free would be their own advancement in virtue and religion. But Samuel did not suppose this to be possible without higher culture for their minds. Education is not a panacea for all human ills, but it is an indispensable condition both of individual and of national progress.

And to this work Samuel devoted himself with eager energy, while in establishing the monarchy he was a reluctant actor. He would have preferred a more direct dependence of the nation upon Jehovah; but he saw that the time was come when Israel required a king, and, true statesman that he was, he gave way. But the culture of the nation had been his earlier and self-chosen task. For when he had anointed Saul to be king, the last of the three signs, which were to remove all hesitation from the heart of the youth as to the reality of his investment with the kingly power, was that he should "meet a company

of prophets coming down from the high place [or, coming from Gibeah] with psaltery and tabret, pipe and harp" (1 Sam. x. 5). Already, therefore, the Prophets were growing numerous, were arranged in an orderly manner, and were instructed in music.

We may conclude, then, that Samuel, trained in priestly learning within the sacred precincts, either understood, from the first, that education was a necessary condition of his reforms, or that he was gradually led to this conviction by feeling the need of fit men to help him in carrying out his designs. At all events, he soon gathered young men of promise round him: for we learn (1 Sam. xix. 18-24) that the first college of the "sons of the prophets" was at Naioth in Ramah. Now Ramah was Samuel's own dwelling-place (1 Sam. vii. 17), and Naioth, or, more strictly, Nevaioth, means "the pastures." In the same way, then, that young men in the meadows at Oxford gathered round the school attached, as it seems, to the Priory of St. Frideswyde, bearing with them fates pregnant with the grandest issues, so there gathered round Samuel the rising youth of Israel for a yet diviner purpose; and rough booths and tents were erected for their lodging in the neighbouring fields.

The necessity would soon arise for more convenient and durable dwellings. So, too, it was at Oxford. The two colleges which claim the greatest antiquity take their origin from benefactions intended for the purchase or erection of buildings in which the poor scholars might lodge. Samuel's scholars did the work themselves. Even long afterwards, at a time when these colleges were at the height of

their renown under Elisha as their rector, we find the students going in a body, with him at their head, to the thickets on the bank of the Jordan to cut down beams wherewith to erect a hall for their teacher's use. In Samuel's time buildings were generally of a very slight character, and most of the people dwelt in tents. And tents and booths sufficed for the use of Samuel's disciples.

The passage already referred to (1 Sam. xix. 20) admits us into the very centre of the prophetic school. By the stratagem of Michal, David had escaped from the emissaries of Saul sent to slay him. But whither should he flee? Where could he find one able and willing to protect him? The thought arose in his mind of the grand old man who had placed Saul upon the throne, and toward whom that wayward king had ever shewn respect. With Samuel he might find safety, and Saul would accord the right of sanctuary to one so fenced round with religious awe. But, no; the Crown is at stake, and Saul sends messengers to tear him thence. They force themselves into Samuel's presence, "but when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied" (1 Sam. xix. 20). Now, first, the word for *company* is not the same as in 1 Sam. x. 10. Literally, there it is a *string*, or, as we say, a band, of prophets, implying simply that there were several of them. Here, though the letters of the word have become curiously transposed in the Hebrew (*lahak* for *kahal*), yet, as all the ancient Versions shew, a regularly organized body

is intended. So Israel, regarded in its religious aspect, is called the *kahal* of Jehovah (Num. xvi. 3; xx. 4), or the *kahal* of Elohim (Deut. xxxi. 30).

But even more remarkable is the next point. It is stated that Samuel was standing in the midst of the young men as their head. The word is that translated *officer* in 1 Kings iv. 5, 7, 27, and shews that this, the first prophetic college, had now arrived at such proportions as to be presided over by an appointed chief. The word even suggests that Samuel's authority was not simply that of Founder. The organization of the "sons of the Prophets" had passed beyond this stage, and probably, by some official act, they had recognized and defined Samuel's exact place. We subsequently find an account of the manner in which Elisha was appointed to the office. At Jericho fifty members of the powerful prophetic college there, warned that God would take away his master from Elisha's head that day, accompanied Elijah and Elisha to the Jordan, and stood as eager spectators of the coming event. With wonder they observed the miracle by which Elijah parted the waters, and watched from afar the journey of the two Seers into the wilderness. For some hours, it may be, they waited impatiently for tidings, and at length Elisha appears alone. Slowly and sadly he advances to the river's edge, and there essays his power. He had prayed for an eldest son's portion of Elijah's spirit (compare 2 Kings ii. 9 with Deut. xxi. 17), and received the promise that, if he saw his master when carried away from him, it should be granted. He now stands with the fallen mantle in his hand on

the Jordan's bank, and striking the waters, cries, "Where is Jehovah, Elijah's God?" At the words the waters roll asunder, and the sons of the prophets at once recognize Elisha as their head. "The spirit of Elijah, they say, doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him" (2 Kings ii. 15). It was a formal acknowledgment of him as Elijah's successor in the government of the prophetic schools, and we have many interesting records afterwards of the manner in which Elisha discharged his office.

The words, then, lead to the conclusion that the college at Ramah had passed beyond its first tentative commencements, that it was of sufficient importance to occupy Samuel's main attention, and developed enough to appoint, or at least acknowledge, him as its head by some formal act. We next learn that Samuel's scholars were *prophesying*. The word is not that used, at the end of the verse, of Saul's messengers, nor of Saul himself, either in verses 23, 24, or in 1 Sam. x. 10, though it is used of him in 1 Sam. x. 11. It is the more formal and strict word for the exercise of prophetic powers, and is a passive verb indicating that those powers were not the Prophet's own, but came to him from without. Are we then to suppose that these young men were all uttering predictions and fortelling the future? or even that they were rhapsodizing, and speaking in unknown tongues? No; the word means that they were being trained in music and singing. So, when David with the captains of the host established the musical services of the sanctuary, they appointed

the sons of Asaph "to prophesy with harps" (1 Chron. xxv. 1–3). So, in Amos iii. 8, the words probably mean, "Jehovah hath spoken: who but must sing his praise?"

I will not dwell here upon the close connection in old time between the poet and the prophet. The poet was one inspired: his poetry an outpouring of the Deity. More to our purpose is it to notice that the intellectual life of a nation begins with, and is fostered by, poetry. Not in books, but upon the tablets of the memory, is inscribed a nation's earliest mental treasure; and to render its preservation easy that treasure has to take such forms as make it easy to remember. Every thoughtful reader will have noticed how full the Pentateuch is of quotations from ancient poetry. One such echo even comes down to us from the antediluvian world, in Lamech's lament to his wives over the youth whom he had slain. The two chief stores among the Israelites of their national history were two books of song: the "Wars of Jehovah," and the "Book of Jashar," or the Upright. Both were intensely religious. For this, which is the common quality of all primæval poetry, was present in that of the Hebrews in a still higher degree. Religion with them was not dissipated among a crowd of charming but motley beings, with which every part of nature was peopled: it was devoted to the one God. Both these records were also historical. They were the nation's archives. And both were preserved by oral tradition. So, when David composed his elegy over Saul and Jonathan, he took care for its preservation by making the people learn it by heart, as the words

of 2 Sam. i. 18 really mean. "The Bow" is there, the name of the elegy itself. The written record of Israel's devotional poetry remains for us in the Book of Psalms, the noblest outpouring of religious feeling that ever nation possessed. When prophesying, therefore, Samuel's scholars were learning by heart, or reciting in measured tones, the religious poetry of their race. There were even among them some composing new hymns of praise to Israel's Jehovah, for among these scholars was David, the sweet singer of Israel; and when such strains were improvised, all recognized in them an even more immediate presence of the Holy Spirit. The words of the singers seemed to be, and were, more than human. Like the Sybil's, it was no human voice:

> "Nec mortale sonans; afflata est numine quando
> Jam propiore Dei."[1]

Nor must we lightly estimate the effect upon the mass of the people of men whose memories were thus stored, and their intellects trained in the study of history and of the devotional poetry of their race. In those days there were none of the many means of mental enjoyment which we now possess. There were no books, no serials, no newspapers, no letters from friends. Men, therefore, who knew by heart the many lays which recorded the mighty deeds of yore, and shewed how Jehovah had ever upheld their nation and raised up mighty men of valour for its deliverance, would hold in their hands the means of most powerfully influencing the minds of the people. But we must not suppose that poetry and music (of which more hereafter) were

[1] Virg. Æn. vi. 50.

their sole studies. These are mentioned because it was the sight of the "sons of the Prophets" arranged in orderly choir, with Samuel as their precentor, singing to the sound of various instruments of music the spirit-stirring ballads which recorded the heroic deeds of their ancestors, or solemn psalms to the praise of God: it was this sight which so filled the minds of Saul's messengers and, finally, of Saul himself with enthusiasm that they too "prophesied." The word in their case means "to imitate or act the part of the prophet," and implies that they joined the sacred choir and sang and recited with it as best they could. Nor can we think meanly of a people who shewed so divine an enthusiasm for poetry and song.

But we must not conclude that these exercises were all. It is evident that the "sons of the Prophets" were, moreover, taught to read and write. These were no common arts, and it is a proof of the early intellectual advancement of the Semitic races that syllabic writing with them goes back to the most remote antiquity (Ewald, "History of Israel," i. 51). But in the Book of Judges these arts seem well-nigh lost. *Now* they appear again, and henceforward we find the annals of the kingdom regularly kept by trained scribes. In 1 Chron. xxix. 29 we see the long series of these chroniclers taking its origin from Samuel. The acts of David, we read, were recorded in regular order by "Samuel the seer, and Nathan the prophet, and Gad, who saw visions." Can we doubt that Nathan and Gad were Samuel's disciples? Or is it reasonable to suppose that they gained the knowledge

of these most important arts anywhere else than in his schools? And what Samuel communicated to them he would certainly communicate to many more. David, we may feel sure, was one who had sat at Samuel's feet, and drunk in from Samuel's mouth not only his love for letters, but also that deep religious feeling which makes him so perfect a representative of the theocratic spirit. It opens to us also fresh subjects for thought when thus we see the probability that David and Nathan and Gad had been schoolfellows. Perhaps only disciples of the highest promise were instructed in studies deemed then so mysterious and profound as to write and read; but evidently from Samuel's days an era of culture begins. A wide chasm divides the untutored warriors of the Book of Judges from the trained scholars of the courts of David and Solomon. Even Joab can read (2 Sam. xi. 14), and Saul might have proved less wild and wayward if he had been thus trained. But he had had no such opportunities; and the people laughed at the thought of one so stalwart, but withal so clumsy and untaught, joining in the literary exercises of educated men (1 Sam. xix. 24).

It remains to say a few words about music. The ancients, as is well known, attached great importance to it as a branch of education. The three things taught to the wealthier youth of Athens were music, grammar, and gymnastics (Plato, "Theog." 122E), and a man who could play no instrument of music was looked upon as an ill-bred fellow. Originally song was closely connected with religion, and Plutarch, in his Treatise on Music, says, that

at first music was regarded as a thing so holy that it was not permitted even to be used in the theatre, but was reserved for the worship of the gods and the education of youth. We also read that Timotheus of Miletum was severely reproved by the Lacedæmonian magistrates because he had eleven strings to his cithara, instead of the usual complement of seven. Such an innovation seemed to them likely to diminish from the solemnity of its sounds and make it fit for lighter and more trivial uses. To no vulgar theme had song stooped down in the olden time. As Homer tells us (Odys. i. 338), "The things that minstrels sing are the exploits of heroes and of gods."

So it was among the Jews. Carrying back its origin to that grand Cainite family who had enriched society with so many noble arts (Gen. iv. 21), they employed it for strictly religious uses. When Moses heard, on his return from the mount with the two tables of stone, "the noise of them that sing" (Exod. xxxii. 18), he knew that the people were engaged in some religious ceremony. They were worshipping, with solemn chants, the golden calf. But history was almost as sacred. The Hebrews saw in all noble deeds the working of the Deity. If a man slew but a lion it was because the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him mightily (Judges xiv. 6). It was a noble thing thus to recognize the true source of all that is great in man; and to these reverent thinkers the mighty achievements of heroes were as fit subjects for song as the praise of God itself: for these deeds were God's deeds. To the sound, then, of psaltery and harp they

recited the glorious acts of their forefathers or sang psalms of praise. How soothing their melody was we learn subsequently, when Elisha refused to prophecy till a minstrel had been brought, who calmed down his angry feelings by tones which awakened in his mind feelings of devoutest reverence.

We see, then, that it was no inferior education which Samuel offered to the young men who gathered round him in the meadows at Ramah. They learned both to read and write; they were trained in the history and religion of their nation; and they were taught singing and instrumental music. Skilled in these arts, we find David attaining to a superiority in poetry, in statesmanship, and in war immeasurably in advance of previous times; and reaching almost to the heroic lineaments of Moses, who, too, had been trained in all human learning, not indeed after the manner of the Hebrews, but in Egyptian schools. And Samuel's work was destined to endure. He had laid his foundations broad and deep, and the Israelites became a cultivated and refined people. And so, finally, we owe to Samuel's schools that race of inspired penmen who, in the first place, have preserved for us the annals of the chosen race. It needs but to read the Books of Chronicles to find how numerous were the authors who studied and wrote the records of their native history. And thus trained and practised, they soared aloft into still higher and more exalted regions. The psalmists found meet utterance and expression for the deepest thoughts of the heart when communing

with God; the later prophets unfolded to man the divine purposes of mercy and the plan of human redemption. Nothing less than this was involved in Samuel's schools. They wrought, first, for the mental and moral culture of the people of Israel; and, finally, for the teaching of the whole world.

R. PAYNE SMITH.

"THAT WICKED PERSON."

I COR. V. 1–5, 13; AND 2 COR. II. 5–11; VII. 8–13.

Among the minor characters of the New Testament there is one who often attracts our thoughts by the fascination of an undefined and mysterious doom. He stands deep in the shadows of the background, so deep that we see him but darkly; but, so far as we can see him, there is a certain ominous and fatal look about the man, an air of guilt, and of such guilt as the moral sense of mankind has pronounced well-nigh unpardonable century after century. He is one of the "reprobates" of the New Testament story, an apostate from the Faith, an offender against the native and inbred instincts of humanity. The very name by which he is commonly known—"the *incestuous* Corinthian"—kindles horror and loathing in us. We condemn him without hesitation, without waiting to hear what may be alleged, if not in his defence, yet in palliation of his guilt. We too commonly assume even that the anathema of the Church still rests upon him, forgetting the absolution pronounced upon him by St. Paul within a few weeks after he had been cast out of the Church.

A careful examination of all the facts of the case will, I believe, much modify our conception of this guilty and most miserable man. It will also modify our conception of the method of discipline which obtained in the primitive Church and of its spirit and intention. And, finally, it will, or ought to, bring out once more, and that most impressively, the merciful and forgiving temper bred by the Gospel of Christ.

1. First of all, then, let us try to get an accurate conception of this man's *Sin*. His sin was that he had married his stepmother (1 Cor. v. 1).[1] Such a marriage as this, though forbidden by Moses, was nevertheless, under certain conditions, permitted by the Scribes who sat in Moses's chair. And hence it has been conjectured that this man was a Jew who had taken advantage of the tradition by which the Scribes made the law of Moses of none effect. From the gravity of the censure which St. Paul pronounces on him it seems more probable, however, that he was a Gentile who had availed himself of the easy law of divorce which obtained in the Roman Empire, and of the license of Corinthian manners, to contract a marriage with a woman whom not the law alone, but public opinion also, affirmed it to be a crime for him to espouse. In itself, I suppose, the sin was not so heinous as many which were committed in that wicked city every day. But there were circumstances connected with it which greatly aggravated its guilt. In the first place, the father of this young man was still alive, and keenly resented the wrong which had

[1] That it was a marriage, and not merely a concubinage, is evident from the language used to describe it, ἔχειν—ποιήσας—κατεργασάμενον. Dean Stanley, *in loco.*

been done him; for (2 Cor. vii. 12) St. Paul speaks of him who had "suffered," as well as of him who had perpetrated, this wrong in terms which prove that they were both of them, not alive only, but active and well-known members of the Corinthian Church. And, then, although the Roman law and habits were so loose that most even of their greatest men were divorced on the slightest pretexts again and again, although at Corinth morality was even at a lower ebb than at Rome, yet throughout the Roman Empire for a man to marry his stepmother, however young and fair she might be, was admitted to be an immoral act, and was branded as a public scandal. Above all, this man was a member of the Christian Church, and was bound therefore to walk by a higher law than that of Rome and to maintain the most scrupulous purity of heart and life. In such a city as Corinth we may be sure that the Christian community was jealously scrutinized by prying and malicious eyes, eager to detect any flaw; and exposed to scandalous tongues, eager to magnify any such flaw, however slight it might be. For a member of the Church to commit any grave sin, for him to fall into a sin from which even the easy conscience of his Heathen neighbours shrank with horror and aversion, was to create a public scandal which might be fatal to the growth and welfare of the Christian society.

These points considered we cannot wonder that St. Paul treated such a sin with the utmost promptitude and severity; that he would be content with nothing short of the instant expulsion of the offending member: that, with curt displeasure and an

unwonted exercise of authority, he exclaimed, "*Cast out from among you that wicked person.*"

On the other hand, are we to regard this young man, this undutiful son, this unworthy Christian, as a sinner above all men? can we allege no plea in mitigation of his offence? To wash an Ethiopian white is not a hopeful task; to "whitewash" him—to make him look white while he remains black—is not a task to my taste. But neither is it a manly nor a godly fashion to condemn a man as wholly and immitigably black because he has one or two foul spots on his character. If we so far exert our imagination as to apply to this case our own experience of human life and passion, that is, if we do him bare justice, it is not hard to raise this Corinthian sinner to our own level, to find in him a man like ourselves, open to similar temptations, falling before them only as we fall. And surely it is as unwise of us, as it is unjust, to conceive of him as a monster wholly remote from and unlike ourselves, and so to put away from us the instruction and warning which his story would otherwise yield.

If, then, we look at him—as we are bound to look at all men—with considerate and compassionate eyes, if we remember *how* men fall into such sins as his to this very day, it will not be long before we find something to say even on his behalf. From St. Paul's brief incidental references to him he appears to have been a young man of sensitive passionate temperament, impetuous in doing well no less than in doing ill. He had been cast out of the Church, and so had his sin brought home to him, but a few weeks before he was in danger of being "swallowed

up by a swelling and excessive sorrow" for his sin (2 Cor. ii. 7). The danger was so real and imminent that the Apostle trembled lest the penitent should be caught in the toils of Satan and sink into the lethargy of despair (*ibid.* 11). To prevent that tragic close to the story, the holy Apostle is profuse in the assurance, "I forgive him: he hath not wronged me" (*ibid.* 10 and 5); and urgent with the Corinthians that they lose no time in forgiving and in comforting him, in certifying and ratifying their love toward him (*ibid.* 7, 8).

Let us remember, then, how easily and in how many ways a man of his temperament and condition might be led, almost unwittingly, into the gravest sin. He is young, sensitive, passionate, impetuous; his mother is dead; the comfort of her counsel and sympathy is withdrawn from him. His father brings home a new wife—a heathen, apparently, from the tone of St. Paul's allusions to her and the absence of any indication that she, like the father and son, was connected with the Christian Church. Possibly, probably, she too is young, and fair, and has been given to the elder man by her parents very mainly because he is a man of some wealth or of established position in the city. By-and-by we discover that she is divorced from the elder man and married to his son. These are the bare facts of the story so far as we can recover them. Does it require a poet, or a novelist, to suspect that behind these facts there probably lay a romance, or a tragedy, such as in similar cases we almost invariably find? The young man *may* have loved this girl before his father saw and desired her; while she favoured the younger, her

parents may have favoured the elder, suitor, and have given her to him against her will. Once married, she may have taken out a divorce, as for almost any or no reason she was able to do under the Roman law, and have given herself to the man she loved. Or, she may have willingly married the elder man, her heart being yet unawaked, and then, brought in her new home into familiar intercourse with the younger, her heart may have gone over to him before she knew that she had lost it, and the two, with the easy morality of the time, may have resolved to break all the dutiful bonds of wife and son that they might gratify their passion for each other. Or,—and this I hold to be the most probable hypothesis,—she may have been one of those fascinating *fatal* women of whom one reads, with a strange power for taking men captive body and soul, and a wicked delight in using it.

If we adopt any one of these hypotheses, or any similar hypothesis, this man at once becomes human to us and alive. And we may be sure that some such hypothesis is required by the facts of the case. A man with so much that was good in him, a man capable of a *dangerous* repentance, a repentance likely to be fatal to both his physical and his spiritual health, could not have fallen into a public and heinous sin without being drawn towards it by some strong constraint, some passionate emotion, without being blinded, in part and for a time, by the sophistries which vehement passion is prompt to weave. I have no wish to palliate his sin. It was a heinous offence against God and man, a terrible violation of filial duty and of his duty to Christ and the law of

Christ. Had it not been checked promptly and sternly, it might have brought the Church in Corinth into a disrepute which it would very hardly have survived. All I wish is to shew that this great sin must have had a strong motive; that the sinner was a man, and a man of like passions with us: and that he does not therefore stand outside the pale of our sympathy and compassion.

2. Let us try to get an accurate conception of *the Sentence* passed on his sin. He had a terrible awaking from his brief passionate dream. One evening he leaves the fair heathen who has bewitched him, and goes down to Church. When he arrives the tables are spread and his brethren are sitting down to their common evening meal. An unusual animation prevails among them. It is known that a letter has arrived from the Apostle Paul, to whom many of them owe their very souls, and that in the course of the evening the letter is to be read to them. Titus, the bearer of the Epistle, sits at the board with a somewhat clouded and anxious face, for he has caught the tremours of the Apostle, and fears how the Church will receive St. Paul's warnings and rebukes. At last, the meal being over, the moment comes, and Titus, or some other, takes the precious Letter in his hand, unrolls it, and begins to read. We know how the Letter opens, with what warm salutations, what affectionate thanksgivings for the abundance of gifts conferred on them, what noble and catholic sentiments, what pathetic recollections of the time when the Apostle was yet among them and of the generous reception they accorded him; what gentle and persuasive rebukes of the factious

spirit which had recently grown up among them, what kindly and humorous satire on *their* being wise while *he* is a fool, their being strong while he is weak, their being honourable while he is despised (1 Cor. i.–iv.) And then, after all this kindly weather, the storm breaks: "Am I to come to you *with a rod*, or in love?"

Up to this point all the members of the Church, even "that wicked person," may have listened with tolerable composure to the Letter. Nothing very grave had been alleged against them. No one person had been singled out for blame. But here, when the question was read, "Am I to come to you with a rod?" surely more than one back must have shivered with a prophetic twinge. Probably, however, the Young Man in whom we are specially interested had no presentiment of what was coming; St. Paul's tone had been so general, so entirely that of one who was addressing a large community in a large spirit, that it was very unlikely that private sins should be singled out in the Letter and exposed. If he was unprepared, so much the worse for him; for now the rod falls in earnest. It is impossible to describe, every one must be left to picture for himself, the agony of shame with which a sensitive impulsive young man would listen to the sentences that follow: "I am absolutely told that there is fornication among you, such as is not even among the heathen,—*that a man should have his father's wife.* And are *ye* puffed up? *and did not rather mourn that he who did this deed had to be removed from your midst?* For *I*, at least, absent in the body but present in the spirit, *have already*

judged him that so shamefully perpetrated this deed: In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ,—ye and my spirit being gathered together with the power of the Lord Jesus, *to deliver such an one to the Adversary, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Cast out from among you that wicked person.*"

It was a terrible awaking; and as we listen to the curt authoritative sentence of the Apostle, we have need to remember how much more terrible it would have been for this Young Man to have been left lapped in his sinful dream than it was even to be waked out of it with the thunders of an apostolic anathema rolling in his ears.

There can be no doubt, I think, either that St. Paul intended to supply the Church at Corinth with a formula of excommunication, or that they used it in the case before us. After due consultation, and when the vote of the Church had been taken,—not an unanimous vote, as it proved; for St. Paul speaks (2 Cor. ii. 6) of the censure or punishment as inflicted "*by the majority*,"—we must suppose, therefore, that the Young Man was summoned before the elders of the Church, and that they pronounced over him the solemn words: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we deliver thee, So-and-so, to Satan, for the destruction of thy flesh, that thy spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." And we may well believe that the sentence fell on the offender like the doom of death. In that sense, at least, we know that it has been used and apprehended in subsequent ages, without any vote of the Church to sanction it, on the sole authority of those who have assumed

to be successors of the Apostles. Many a devout and godly man, for no worse crime than that he thought more truly and deeply than his fellows, or that he rebuked the sins of his spiritual guides, has been cast out from the bosom of the Church and put to the ban. And it is to be feared that many of us have suffered this horrible abuse of the formula to qualify and pervert our conception of its original meaning and intention. No one who honestly *studies* the solemn language of the Apostle can for a moment suppose—though, for want of study, many have supposed—that he meant either to put this man under a ban, to shut him out from the common requisities and courtesies of human life, or to pronounce a mystic spiritual doom on him, to cut him off from all hope of eternal life, to call or make him a son of perdition. What he meant is plain enough from his own words, if only we interpret them by his habitual convictions and by the principles laid down or assumed in Holy Writ. Thus interpreted, he meant (1) to have this open offender against the law of Christ cut off, cast out, from the communion of the Church, at least for a time, and so brought to a knowledge of his sin and a sincere repentance for it. St. Paul habitually conceived of the great Heathen world as the domain of Satan, as under the power of the prince of this world: and, therefore, to cut a man off from the Church, and cast him back into the world from which he had been drawn and raised was, in his view, to "deliver such an one to Satan." (2) St. Paul habitually conceived of pain and disease, nay, even of the losses, obstructions, rebuffs to which men are exposed as the work of that evil spirit who is for ever seeking to thwart

the gracious purposes of God and to undermine the welfare of man,—as indeed do all the Scripture writers from the time of Moses and Job downward. Is any good or kind purpose crossed? he instantly sets it down to the machinations of the devil; as when he wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Epistle ii. 18), "I, Paul, would have come to you once and again, *but Satan hindered*." Is he tormented with a disabling and incurable malady? In "the stake in his flesh" he sees "*an angel of Satan* sent to buffet him" (2 Cor. xii. 7). He had the highest authority for his conclusion, since our Lord Himself saw in the woman who was bowed together so that she could in nowise lift up herself, "a daughter of Abraham *whom Satan had bound*, lo, these eighteen years" (St. Luke xiii. 16). Probably, therefore, just as Job was given over into the hand of Satan for a time, to be tried by loss of fortune, loss of children, loss of wealth, loss of friends; or just as a mist and darkness fell on Elymas the Sorcerer at the rebuke of Paul, so that he went blind, not seeing the sun for a season; so also, when the sentence of excommunication was pronounced on the sinful Corinthian, there came on him a succession of cruel losses—perhaps even the loss of the fair heathen woman herself, or some malignant form of disease which purged out the fever of his blood and brought him to himself. So much seems implied, indeed, in his being delivered to Satan "*for the destruction of his flesh*." But how far all this differs both from the public ban to which the Church has again and again exposed the heretic, and from the mystic spiritual doom which some have discovered in this

formula of excommunication, need scarcely be pointed out, since any one who reads the words of St. Paul with thought and intelligence can only be amazed at finding that such obvious misconstructions have been put upon them. For (3) the Apostle himself expressly tells us that the "destruction," the evil and deadly power at work in this wicked person's "flesh," was intended, not for his damnation, but, contrariwise, for his salvation,—"that *the spirit may be saved* in the day of the Lord Jesus." In precisely the same way he speaks (1 Tim. i. 20) of Hymenæus and Alexander when they had made shipwreck of their faith: "whom I have delivered unto Satan," not that they may be "sold captive to the devil to do his will," or be "blotted out of the book of life," but "*that they may learn not to blaspheme*." So, again, in writing to these very Corinthians, he reminds them that for their abuse of a Christian ordinance many among them were sick, many dead, warns them that all will be judged who in like manner offend, and yet assures them that, if they are thus judged, they will "simply be chastened of the Lord, *that they may not be condemned with the world*" (1 Cor. xi. 32).

On the whole, then, we may reasonably refuse to be terrified into any abject submission by the mystic thunders with which ecclesiastics have clothed this formula of excommunication. We may say with confidence and gratitude that the sentence pronounced on the guilty Corinthian was a most merciful sentence, since it was designed to quicken in him a profound sense of his sin and a hearty repentance for it, and so to save his soul alive from

the pit into which his unruly passions were fast plunging it.

3. Let us try to form a true conception of *the Absolution* pronounced on him. If "the end crowns the work," who that has "seen the end of the Lord" with this Young Man can deny that even the work of his excommunication was a work of mercy? Obviously, he was not chastized in vain. His conscience was roused and energized by the pungent stimulus applied to it. He saw, and confessed, and renounced his sin; his sorrow for it swelled and grew till it threatened to prove more fatal to him than either his sin or the disease which rebuked it. And when Titus brings Paul tidings of his repentance and his danger, the heart of the Apostle is strangely and profoundly moved. In his eagerness to express his pity and love, he grows almost unintelligible, inarticulate (2 Cor. v. 5–7). He can hardly bring himself to speak of the grief with which he first heard of the Young Man's sin,—"lest I be too severe on him," or to admit that his great grief sprang from that cause "save in part." He is profuse and fervent in his injunctions to the elders and members of the Church that they restore him in the spirit of meekness and charity—profuse and fervent in the assurances of his own forgiveness and renewed affection. "Forgive him," he cries, "and comfort him, lest he be swallowed up by a swelling sorrow," lest "Satan should defraud us of him." "Whom ye forgive, I also forgive . . . in the person of Christ," *i.e.*, with the full weight of my apostolical authority to bind and to loose. "I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy, in all this trouble of

ours." So grateful is he for the happy issue of all this trouble that he well-nigh persuades himself that he wrote so sharply as he did, not because of his grief and horror at the sin which had been committed among them, but "that I might put you to the proof, and know whether in all things ye were obedient," that even "your cares for us might be made manifest unto *you*"—rather than to *us*—"in the sight of God." It is impossible to read these sentences—and such sentences abound in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians—without becoming aware that the large loving heart of the Apostle was in a tumult of happy excitement, full of ruth and pity for the sinner who had suffered so much, full of joy and thankfulness for his repentance, and yearning with the keenest desire to comfort and reassure him.

And in this passion of pity and forgiving love, this eager and boundless charity for those who repent and seek forgiveness, St. Paul was a faithful exponent of the very spirit of the Gospel. The very message and power of the Gospel are involved in the truths illustrated by this Young Man's experience, viz., that the miseries which afflict men spring from their sins, and are designed to correct the sins from which they spring and to win men to repentance, in order that they may be saved in the spirit, on the day, and by the grace, of the Lord Jesus: that there is hope even for the worst and vilest of sinners. If there was mercy and hope even for "that wicked person," it is very certain that no man need suffer himself to be "swallowed up by the swelling sorrow" of spiritual despair.

S. COX.

BRIEF NOTES ON PASSAGES OF THE GOSPELS.

II. THE CAMEL AND THE NEEDLE'S EYE.

(*Matt.* xix. 24; *Mark* x. 25; *Luke* xviii. 25.)

On the general narrative of the Young Ruler who came to Jesus with a question, somewhat patronising in its form[1] and wholly objectionable in spirit, I have nothing to add to what I have already written.[2] I have accounted for the young man's breathless hurry[3] by his desire to catch Jesus before He left the Peræan for the cis-Jordanic Bethany, and have endeavoured to shew the erroneous tendency betrayed by his question, the Divine wisdom and tender irony of the spirit in which our Lord answered it, and the reason why He applied a crucial test to one whose very appeal—if it came from the heart—implied his desire to rise to something more high and heroical in religion than a merely conventional goodness. How much the Young Ruler had over-rated his own desire for things spiritual,—how he failed to give up the near sweetness of his temporal possessions for the perfect sacrifice which would prove his fitness for that eternal life which he desired,—how, in fact, with over-clouded brow and sorrowing heart,[4] he made "the great refusal," is one of the most touching narratives of the Gospel history.

1 "Good teacher" (Luke xviii. 18). No Rabbi was ever thus addressed, and the epithet sounds very like a patronising qualification of the title; which may be part of the reason why Jesus rejects it.

2 "Life of Christ," vol. ii. pp. 159–163.

3 "Running up and falling at his knees." A picturesque touch, preserved as usual by St. Mark (Chap. x. 17).

4 Mark x. 22, *στυγνάσας*; Luke xviii. 23, *περίλυπος*.

Jesus looked round Him[1] to see whether the sad incident had brought its own lesson, and, perhaps because it had failed to do so, He said to his disciples, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." The words filled them with amazement. Peasants by birth and in rank, accustomed from childhood to that sad, uncomplaining, unquestioning submissiveness which, to this day, characterizes the Fellahîn of Palestine more entirely than any of the patient Orientals of down-trod classes,—familiar, too, with the spectacle of enormous wealth accumulated in the hands of those to whom they looked up with awful reverence, the words came to them like some strange revelation.

Those wealthy Sadducean priests, whom, at high tides and festivals, they saw officiating in almost royal state amid the gorgeous ceremonials of the Day of Atonement—those Rabbis and Pharisees, who moved at their ease even among Roman officials, and claimed, in right of their wisdom, an equality with kings[2]—those friends of Menahem, who had once been Essenes, but now walked in golden garments in Herod's palaces[3]—would it be *hard* for all these to enter into the kingdom of heaven? Would it be hard for "the Master Nicodemus[4]—hard for the honourable Sanhedrist of Ramath?

[1] Mark x. 23, περιβλεψάμενος.

[2] See the anecdote of King Jannæus, the Persian Satrap, and Simeon Ben Shetach, "Life of Christ," vol. ii. p. 123.

[3] Matt. xi. 3; Jost. i. 259.

[4] John iii. 10, ὁ διδάσκαλος, perhaps the *chakam*, or third officer, of the Sanhedrim.

Even so! "Children," said Jesus, "how hard it is to enter into the kingdom of God!"[1]

Had this answer been—as it appears in our Version—"How hard is it for them *that trust in riches* to enter into the kingdom of God," there would not have been the same ground for the intense and overwhelming astonishment of the disciples.[2] As a gloss, indeed, the explanatory words are perfectly true, and shew an insight into the fact that the danger lies not in the *possession* of riches, but in the *being possessed by* them. But it was not our Lord's method thus to water down the force of his own utterances. It was his will, during the short years of his stay on earth, to impress for ever upon the souls of men the great truths and principles to which He gave expression. Some of these truths had long been in the possession of mankind,[3] had even found a timid and hesitating

[1] This is the reading of B.Δ.K. and the Coptic Version, and even if it were not supported by the immense authority of ℵ, yet to any one familiar with the method of Christ's answers, it would possess high internal evidence of probability. (I may mention that, in my "Life of Christ," by a mere clerical error, D was read for Δ, and this single accidental slip, in volumes of 1000 pages, involving *many* thousands of allusions and references, was quoted in one leading review in proof that I was not at home in my subject. Such is the competency, the candour, and the generosity of anonymous criticism.)

[2] Matt. xix. 25, *ἐξεπλήσσοντο σφόδρα.*

[3] Celsus makes it a charge against our Lord that He had borrowed the sentiment about the danger of riches from Plato! This is not the place to prove once more the total misapprehension on which such a charge rests. Perhaps, however, the reader may be interested to see how Plato thought on the subject, and how deeply even a Greek could feel the danger of riches. "It is impossible," he says, "to be exceptionally rich and exceptionally good. . . . The very rich are not good." Plato, "De Legg," v. 743.——"It is difficult for a rich man to be sober-minded," is an axiom found in Stobæus, Anthol., vol. i. p. 146. See "Christliche Klänge," p. 86.

expression on the lips of some of the greatest Rabbis. But a truth may lie in the lumber-room of the memory side by side with the most exploded errors, and the mere knowledge or enunciation of it is wholly useless to mankind unless it be clothed in such a form as may enforce conviction and insure accordant practice. And this was why — following his chosen way of calling attention to the awful depth of his meaning by the startling paradox of the form in which that meaning was clothed — Jesus added, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to pass into the kingdom of God."[1]

Undoubtedly it was a very startling utterance. The acceptance of the modification, "*those that trust in riches*," is a sign of the very early date at which an effort was made to soften the meaning;[2] but even if that be accepted as the genuine text in St. Mark's Gospel only, the total absence of so remarkable a hint, by way of explanation, in the other Synoptists would seem to shew that it does not represent the *exact words* spoken by our Lord. And, again, even if Jesus did use that expression, the proverb which He here quotes, and which is preserved in all three Evangelists alike, would still be left in all its sternness.

1. It is well known that an early attempt was made to mitigate the proverb either by reading *κάμιλον*, "a rope," or by explaining *κάμηλον* in the same sense. As to the first attempt, there is not

[1] Mark x. 25, *διελθεῖν, εἰσελθεῖν.*

[2] Schleiermacher calls it "a limitation by a later hand."

only—in spite of Itacism[1]—no tittle of diplomatic evidence in favour of *κάμιλος*, but it is even very doubtful whether any such word exists at all. The fact that it does not once occur in the whole of the LXX., or elsewhere in the New Testament, would alone be almost fatal to its existence, at any rate, as a Hellenistic form; but, further than this, it is not once found in the whole range of classical literature, and is only vouched for by Suidas and a scholiast on the "Wasps of Aristophanes."[2] Origen, however, and Theophylact inform us that while they retained the form *κάμιλον*, there were some who understood the word to mean "a ship's rope." This meaning is given to it in Phavorinus, but since it is a meaning otherwise unknown, both to classical and to Hellenistic Greek, it may fairly be dismissed as a mere chimera, which had its origin from difficulties connected with this very passage. The obviously intentional parallel between *passing through* the needle's eye, and *passing into* the kingdom of God, which I have already indicated, would alone be sufficient to condemn it as a baseless conjecture.[3]

2. Are we, then, to take the expression quite literally as a proverb, or can we accept the inter-

[1] Itacism is the constant confusion of vowels in the MSS., due to the obliteration of all distinctness in the vowel sounds at the era to which the present MSS. of the New Testament belongs.

[2] Suidas, *s.v.* *κάμηλος*. Scholiast, art. Vesp., 1030.

[3] Whatever more can be said for it may be found in Bochart's "Hierozoicon," i. 92. He is misled in supposing that *κάμηλος* ever did or could mean "rope," and therefore I attach no importance to his assertion that the word גמל ever could or did bear this meaning. It is fair to add that he quotes from Buxtorf a Talmudic proverb, which says, "The passage of the soul from the body is as difficult as that of a rope through a narrow passage." See Talmud, *s.v.* בטורין.

pretation that "the eye of the needle" was a familiar expression for the side gate of a city?

So far as I am aware—but on this point I may easily be mistaken — the first traveller who called attention to the fact that the small side gate sometimes found in Eastern cities was called "the needle's eye" was Sir J. Chardin, in his "Travels in Persia." The same fact has been attested by others, as, for instance, by the late Lord Nugent, in his "Lands Classical and Sacred." "Entering Hebron," he says, "we were proceeding through a double gateway such as is seen in so many of the old Eastern cities—even in some of the modern—one wide-arched road, and another narrow one by the side, through the latter of which persons on foot generally pass, to avoid the chance of being jostled or crushed by the beasts of burden coming through the main gateway. We met a caravan of loaded camels thronging this passage. The drivers cried out to my two companions and myself, desiring us to betake ourselves for safety to the gate with the smaller arch, calling it *Es summ el kayût* (the hole, or eye, of the needle). If, as on inquiry I am inclined to believe, this name is applied, not to this gate in Hebron only, but generally in cities where there is a footway entrance by the side of the larger one, it may, perhaps, give an easy and simple solution of what in the text (Mark x. 25) has appeared to some to be a strained metaphor; whereas that of the entrance gate, low and narrow, through which the sumpter-camel cannot be made to pass unless with great difficulty, and stripped of all the incumbrances of his load, his trappings, and his merchan-

dise, may seem to illustrate more clearly the foregoing verse: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.'"

The kindness of one of the many correspondents who, though personally strangers, have written to tell me of points connected with the life of Christ, enables me to add a new illustration to this interesting fact.

"In the summer of 1835," says a gentleman whose name I cannot mention without his permission, "when travelling in the northern part of Africa (Morocco), I took up my abode for a time in the house of a Jew named Bendelak. The house was built quadrangular, having an open court, in which beautiful plants were flourishing, and where the family sat in the heat of the day beneath a large awning. High double gates faced the street, not unlike our coach-house doors, in one of which was a smaller door, which served as an entrance to the court. Being seated one day in a balcony of the upper chamber, *I suddenly heard the exclamation, 'Shut the needle's eye.' 'Shut the eye.' Looking down I saw a stray camel trying to push through the little open doorway.* Shortly afterwards I questioned the master of the house (a man whom I can never recall to mind without feelings of the utmost respect), and learnt from him that the double doors were always called 'the needle,' and the little door 'the needle's eye,' which explanation of course reminded me forcibly of the well-known passage in St. Matthew. Bendelak assured me that no camel would push through 'the eye' unless driven by stick or hunger, and always *without any back load.*

If the allusion of Christ be to this, it forcibly teaches the lesson that a rich man must strive and humble himself—must be willing to leave behind the load of his riches—must hunger for the bread of heaven —or he can never pass through the narrow way that leadeth unto life eternal."

No one will deny that the sense thus yielded is very beautiful, and that it is at first sight less discouraging than to take both the terms of the proverb in their literal sense. The metaphor will then remind us of those other passages in which our Lord said that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force;"[1] and "Enter ye in at the strait gate, . . . because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."[2] It will remind us too of the figure used by two of our poets. "Humble," says George Herbert,

> "Humble we must be if to heaven we go,
> High is the roof there, but the gate is low."

"Heaven's gate," says Webster,

> "Is not so highly arched
> As princes' palaces; they that enter there
> Must go upon their knees."

The rich man can enter no less easily than the poor man if he will but enter *as* a poor man, laying aside the pomp of earthly circumstance, the thick clay of earthly accumulations, the cares and deceitfulness of riches. There is no difficulty about his entering; the only difficulty lies in his unwillingness to lay aside the gilded burdens which render entrance impossible.

[1] Matt. xi. 12.
[2] Matt. vii. 13, 14; *cf.* A. xiv. 22; 1 Pet. iv. 18.

3. Yet, after all,—however ingenious, interesting, and valuable, by way of illustration, this explanation of the proverb may be—the obvious interpretation is probably the true one. There can be no doubt of the fact that *at the present day*, in many parts of the East, the small side gate, through which a camel could only pass if it was entirely unladen, and could then only be pushed through on its knees, is familiarly known as the "needle's eye." But we have no proof whatever that such a designation existed in ancient days. And, on the other hand, there is proof that, soon after the Christian era, this and similar proverbs were familiar in the East, in their most literal sense, as expressions of impossibility.

Here are some of the Rabbinical passages :—

I. "Rabbi Samuel bar-Nahmeni says, in the name of Rabbi Jonathan, that man only sees in dreams the thoughts of his heart, as Daniel says (Chap. ii. 29). The proof that it is so, observes Raba, is that a dream does not shew us either a palm-tree of gold, or *an elephant passing through a needle's eye*,"—literally, *ear*. (Bab Berachoth, f. 55*b*. *ad fin*.)

II. "When Rabbi Shesheth had uttered an untenable remark, Rabbi Amram replied, 'Perhaps you are a Pombadithan,'[1]—one of those who send an elephant through a needle's eye, *i.e.*, as the Aruch[2] says, "one of those who say impossibilities." (Babha Metzia, f. 32, 2.)

[1] Pombaditha was a Jewish school, at the mouth of Baditha, a canal between the Tigris and Euphrates, founded in the third century after Christ.

[2] The Aruch is a Lexicon to the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, by Nathan Ben Jechiel.

III. In Jevamoth, f. 45, 1, is the not dissimilar proverb, applied to the marvellous tales of travellers, "A camel in Media dances in a cab," *i.e.*, the smallest possible space.[1]

These passages prove that the proverb, like "Physician, heal thyself," and others used by our Lord, was one in common use; and the only reason why the elephant is substituted for the camel is because the two first Rabbinic passages come from the Babylonian Gemara, and in Babylona the elephant was common, while in Palestine it was unknown.

It is no slight confirmation of this view that the expression was obviously taken in its most literal sense by one so familiar with camels and with every phase of Eastern life and literature as Mohammed, for in the Koran (Sura vii. 38) we read, "The impious shall *find the gates of heaven shut;* nor shall he enter there *till a camel shall pass through the eye of a needle.*"

Lastly, to shew the literal meaning of the "needle's eye," we may adduce a passage never quoted in Commentaries, but mentioned by Bochart in his "Hierozocion"[2] and by Buxtorf in his Talmudic Lexicon: "*A needle's eye* is not too narrow for two friends, nor is the world wide enough for two enemies."[3]

Such, then, being the meaning of the proverb, did Christ really intend to say that it was "*impossible*" for a rich man to enter the kingdom of

[1] See Lightfoot, Schöttgen, and Meuschen, on Matt. xix. 24.
[2] Hierozocion, i. 92. [3] "Lex. Talmud," *s. v.* נקב.

heaven? The fact that He *did* use this very word in his reply to the exclamations into which the Apostles broke, is an additional and decisive proof that this proverb *did* imply, not something which might be conceived of as merely difficult—such as compressing a rope to the dimensions of a needle's eye, or driving a camel through a narrow gate—but something which justifies the emphasis of his assertion, when, with that earnest gaze fixed upon them which two of the Synoptists record,[1] He said to his disciples, "*With men this is impossible.*"

The words which follow sufficiently explain this thought, and prevent the words from lending themselves to any Essene or Ebionite misinterpretation: "but with God all things are possible."

In other words, a rich man *is*, so far as his riches are concerned, in a more difficult position for the attainment of heavenly-mindedness, and, therefore, for that humility of spirit and disengagement from the cares and snares of life, which are essential to all who would enter God's kingdom, than a poor man is. Poverty also has its own temptations, and God either equalizes the lots of men, or, at any rate, sends no severer temptation without also sending "*more grace*" whereby to resist it.[2] Along with the temptation He provides also the way of escape.[3] And, since men have always loved and always will love riches, the Lord desired to force upon us the conviction that if we would increase our wealth we run a terrible risk of also increasing our worldliness. From

[1] Mark x. 27; Matt. xix. 26, ἐμβλέψας . . . αὐτοῖς.

[2] James iv. 6.

[3] 1 Cor. x. 13, καὶ τὴν ἔκβασιν, not "*a*" but "*the*" way of escape.

this inordinate love of riches, simply, we CANNOT be saved by our own power. Left to ourselves we should fail utterly in the attempt to combine the love of God with the deceitfulness of earthly mammon. But we are not left to ourselves. The salvation of the soul in the midst of earthly riches requires *a spiritual miracle*, a miracle of the grace of God. But so far from miracles being rare, we live in the midst of them. Without them no man could be saved at all, least of all any man who has so much about him as the rich have to make this world sweet and easy. Souls are saved, men enter into the heavenly kingdom, in spite of difficulties humanly insuperable, and only because nothing is impossible with God. F. W. FARRAR.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER V. VERSES 1–16.

THE Apostle continues his practical advice to his son Timothy, and suggests the principle upon which the Church at Ephesus should administer its eleemosynary funds. The indiscriminate and boundless liberality of the Church at Jerusalem in the first gush of its Pentecostal life produced such extreme and agonizing want, that the Apostles were fain to secure help from the converts in Philippi, Corinth, Galatia, and Antioch, for the poor saints in Jerusalem. It does not seem probable that other Churches adopted, or were encouraged to adopt, the principle of virtual communism. Still, He who claimed to be the Judge of the widow, who by the

lips and deeds of the Divine Lord lavished special love on those who were bereft of their earthly sources of succour and protection, gave special charge from the first concerning the "widows" who had found their only rest and all their hope in Him; and the justice of their claim upon the Church was recognized by Paul. He analyzed and adjusted these claims, however, with due regard to ordinary prudence and domestic responsibility.

Before he discussed this question he reminded Timothy of his relation to all classes in his flock:

Verses 1, 2.—*Do not sharply reprimand an elderly man, but exhort him as* (you would) *a father;* (exhort) *the younger men as brethren, the elderly women as mothers, the young women as sisters, with all purity.* From Chrysostom's comment to the present day it has been perceived, even by Roman Catholic Expositors (see Mack) as well as others, that the Apostle is not speaking of ecclesiastical officers, but of the different ages and sexes of the members of the Church. Let the family relationship be sustained by the young Pastor to those whom he may be called upon to teach, reprove, and exhort; let him treat the elders as his father or mother, with the reverence and consideration due to hoary hairs and long experience of life; let him treat the younger people as his brothers or sisters; let him be reverent, cautious, earnest, manly, brotherly, chaste in all his thoughts, and never let him assume a tone which would be inconsistent with these dear relationships.

Arrogant or sharp rebuke, a domineering or

haughty spirit,[1] a readiness on the part of a young Pastor, — even though he be the Apostle's own representative,—to trample upon the tender feelings of others, in the flush of official responsibility, or any eagerness to assume more than the position of a son or a brother in the Lord, is here strongly denounced by St. Paul; and the injunction is not valueless to-day.

Verse 3.—*Honour those who are widows indeed.*[2] The honour probably was that of being placed on the roll of persons specially entitled to the alms of the Church. Destitution and loneliness are the conditions of the "honour" which is especially due to the veritable widow. Treat with reverence those who are thus thrown upon the tenderness of God. "Support" would depart too widely from the meaning of the word (*τιμᾶν*), but it would be fair to translate it, if possible, by a term which should express the practical form in which the honour thus cherished should find expression.

Verse 4.—Before St. Paul describes the "widow indeed," he throws light upon the subject by his advice concerning the class of widows who ought not to be thrown upon the liberality of the Church.

If, says he, *any widow have children or grandchildren*,[3] *let them learn first*, as a prime duty, *to*

[1] Ἐπιπλήττειν is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, but is found in Eustathius on Homer, and is employed in this sense in Josephus and Polybius.

[2] *Cf.* 1 Cor. xiv. 25, Gal. iii. 21, for this use of ὄντως.

[3] Ἔκγονα is used in the LXX., Deut. vii. 13, and elsewhere for descendants: the translation, English Version, "nephews" is in the older English usage of that word. See quotations from Chaucer, Sir Thomas More, John Locke, in "Richardson's Dictionary," where "nephews" is used as "nepotes," for descendants.

shew piety towards their own household. Some Expositors have supposed χήραι to be the subject of the verb, and that the widows are to "shew piety" *and return compensation to their forbears* by generosity to their descendants. This idea is strangely inapposite, and the advice, in a multitude of cases, impracticable. The simple fact that the widows should have children *dependent* upon their love and care augments their destitution, and certainly does not exclude from the charity of the Church. Moreover, the forms of expression descriptive of their duties are incongruous on this hypothesis. Εὐσεβεῖν is not wrenched at all from its natural meaning if it is supposed to refer to filial piety of children towards a widowed mother, but it would be strained in meaning if made to describe maternal duties. So with the second clause. A widow would hardly, *because* she has children and grandchildren, be burdened with the duty of requiting through them her obligations to her own ancestors. This was, however, the interpretation of Chrysostom, and is adopted by Huther and others. I admit that there is an ancient reading [1] which would favour the interpretation, and that some difficulty attends the supposition that the "children or grandchildren" are the subjects of the verb, "let them learn" (μανθανέτωσαν), for we should have expected the word (αὐτὴν and αὐτῇ) "her" to have taken the place of "household" and "forbears," which is not the case. Still, it is far more congruous that the widows should be supported by children or descendants who are able to

[1] Μανθάνετω has no diplomatic value, though it is followed by the Vulgate, which here translates, *discat.*

do so, than that a widow who is burdened with home cares should be here solemnly charged to take care of her own family. I conclude, then, that the Apostle bids the children and descendants of widows to requite their tender love with filial reverence, and to be ashamed to cast their relatives upon the charity of the Church. *For this* devout compensation of maternal love, he adds, *is acceptable before God.*

Verse 5.—*But*, in contradistinction with the widow who is surrounded with children and grandchildren, there is *she that is a widow indeed, and has been left desolate*, "alone," with none to cheer her solitary life or minister to her comforts, *hath placed her hopes in God, and abides* or continues *in prayers and supplications by night and by day.* The abiding in prayer and supplication is more than offering ejaculatory, formal, or occasional prayer. The expression suggests some comprehension of the meaning of our Lord's words, "that one ought always to pray, and not to faint."[1] "Prayer" and "supplication" have already been (Chap. ii. 1) compared, and the usage of the two words discussed. Like Anna, who served God in fasting and prayer *through*[2] day and night, and was utterly devoted to the worship of the Temple, the "widow indeed" is supposed to have cast herself upon the protection and Fatherhood of God, and *by*[2] night and day to be occupied in devout exercises.

[1] Τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι (Luke xviii. 1).

[2] Observe the usage (Luke ii. 37) of the accusative as denoting *duration*, and, in this place, the genitive as indicating *occasion*. The worship of heaven gives "day" before "night" as the prominent idea, though it is curious to find "night" spoken of at all. (Rev. vii. 15.)

Verse 6.—*But*, on the other hand, *she*, *i.e.*, the widow, *that lives deliciously* or *riotously* (this word[1] is a rare one, and suggests extravagance, luxury in dress and desire) *is dead while she lives.* Wettstein quotes from the "Antigone" of Sophocles two lines, in which the use of a similar comparison betrays a strange difference of moral purpose and teaching. They are these: "When men abandon pleasures, I do not reckon that such a one lives, but I consider him a living corpse."[2]

Verse 7 contains another instance of the private character of this Epistle. Again and again the Apostle reminds Timothy that he is not merely laying down principles, but suggesting the very matter of his special instructions.[3] *These things* (with reference to the character of the "widows indeed," a portraiture heightened in colouring by the contrasted picture of the living and bedizened corpse) *command, that they*, viz., such widows, *may be irreproachable*,[4] not unblamed, but unworthy of censure, even should the sharp tongue of slander be put out against them; a thing which was likely enough to occur in a crowded city like Ephesus.

Verse 8.—*But if any one* (*i.e.*, not merely one who has a widowed mother dependent upon him, but any professed believer in Christ) *does not make provision for his own* (dependent relatives of any

[1] Σπαταλᾶ is one of the sins of Sodom and of her daughters (Ezek. xvi. 49), and is associated (James v. 5) with τρυφᾶν, a word of similar import.

[2] Soph. Antig. 1165–67.

[3] *Cf.* Chap. i. 18; ii. 1; iii. 14; iv. 6, 9, 11; v. 21; vi. 2, 13, 17; 2 Tim. ii. 2, 14; iv. 1; Tit. ii. 1, 15; iii. 1, 8.

[4] This is the difference between the two words ἄμεμπτος and ἀνεπίλημπτος.

degree), *and especially for his own household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.* This is strong language, and we find in it a "counsel of perfection" that shews how deeply and practically the Apostle had entered into the mind of Christ. The form of the conditional sentence[1] shews that he was dealing with no doubtful or conjectural case, but with a matter of fact. The word rendered "his own," is that which is used in John xiii. 1 *ff.* for those who were brought into close fellowship with Jesus; and it is used in a broader sense in John i. 11, where the words "his own" refer to the people whom He came to save. The second phrase describes the members of the same (οἶκος, or) family. Mack supposes, from its use in Gal. vi. 10, Ephes. ii. 19, that it refers to all members of the household of faith, this would give to the injunction such enormous breadth as to deprive it of force. A denial of "the faith" is involved in practical neglect of the responsibilities of home life. If so, then "faith" may be repudiated by other than intellectual processes. Moreover, we learn that an acceptance and a confession of the faith carries with it, as an inseparable adjunct, both love and sacrifice. The faith of Christ ought to make a man a more faithful husband, a more loving father, a more dutiful son. Should it fail in any case to do this, we are here distinctly taught, not that we might as well have intellectually rejected the faith, but that we have, as a matter of fact, *denied* it, and are "worse" than those who have never professed to believe in the living God or in the loving Christ. Even the precepts of Heathen

[1] Εἰ οὐ, with the indicature on both protasis and apodosis.

philosophy will carry one who does not believe in Christ to the practical recognition of these obvious duties. It is a wretched thing, doubtless, from the standpoint of the Apostle to be "without faith," to be an "unbeliever;" but there is something "worse."

Verse 9.—*Let a widow be enrolled*, or put in the catalogue or list. Alford translates "Let a woman be inserted in the catalogue as a widow," on the ground of the emphatic position of the word χήρα, which is thus the predicate, and not the subject, of the verb. Ellicott virtually agrees. The sense is much the same. Now there is no difficulty as to the general meaning of the word καταλέγειν, which simply means to enter in a list, *conscribiren*. But great difference of opinion prevails in determining the nature of the roll, catalogue, or list here referred to. I will state briefly the different opinions. Many Expositors, after the lead of Schleiermacher, and on different grounds, have urged that this "catalogue" introduces a perfectly new theme, that it refers to an *order* of deaconesses, of women devoted to the service of the Church, whose moral fitness, however, the writer of the Epistle had already discussed in Chap. iii. 11 *ff*. Schleiermacher argues, from this hint of the ecclesiastical constitution thus supposed to exist, a later date than the life of Paul for the composition of the Epistle. Mack, on the other hand, finds apparent confirmation of the idea in the Theodosian Code, where there occurs a late interpretation of this very passage in the Epistle: "No woman, unless she has attained sixty years, according to the command of the Apostle, is taken into the sisterhood (*consortium*) of deaconesses." Baur and De Wette

have, notwithstanding their theories with reference to the authorship of the Epistle, repudiated this interpretation, and shewn that the known duties of deaconesses in the early Church must have been utterly incompatible with an age of sixty years. Moreover, virgins were elected to this office, and they were not forbidden to marry, as the women placed in this catalogue would appear to have been. Another hypothesis is far more probable. It is that the "catalogue" was a list of *presbyteræ*, rather than of *diaconissæ*, of elderly "widows," who were at this period of Church development entrusted with duties far more akin to those of the presbyter than the deacon. Here Mosheim, Grotius, Wiesinger, Huther, Ellicott, and Alford are in agreement, while Mosheim endeavours to shew that there are other indications of the existence in apostolic times of such an order. De Wette will not allow that the passage before us establishes apostolic precedent in this respect; but he admits the probability that, at an early date, holy women did take upon themselves a vow of perpetual widowhood, and did perform important functions in the Church. The proof, however, of such an order of ecclesiastical women, ordained to sacred duties, can only be found at a very much later date, and it is strongly against the supposition that the early Greek Expositors knew nothing of its existence. It should also be observed that nothing is said of their duties to the Church, and every remark rather justifies the duties of the community to them, than theirs to the community.

The third view commends itself far more forcibly

to my mind: it was held by Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Jerome, and by Erasmus, Calvin, Neander, and latterly by Fairbairn, viz., that the Apostle is simply giving definite and exclusive directions about the widows who are to be thrown *entirely* on the sustenance of the Church. It is objected that he has already defined their moral characteristics in the fourth verse. He has indeed given some hints, but not very definite or final ones, on this subject, being led on to say, parenthetically, some strong things about the duties of those who have widowed relatives, to provide for them. He has not dropped the theme, and there are further elements in the question, such for instance, as the age, antecedents, and probable future of those who should receive their entire maintenance from the Church, on which he proceeds to enlarge. It is said that the minimum age of sixty years is a harsh measure of exclusion from sustenance, and that younger widows might be exposed to even greater privations. That is perfectly true; but, then, the Apostle strongly advises the younger widows to admit second nuptials, and to avoid the temptations of celibacy. The antecedents again, it is said, seem to apply to those who were possessed of private fortune, and therefore inapplicable to those who were seeking the alms of the Church. This circumstance would only augment and aggravate the pain of poverty and desolation, and it should be remembered throughout that the Apostle is merely considering the case of those who are, by the death of their natural protectors, become desolate and destitute. It does not follow that women thus "honoured" and provided for, should not, as far as

strength and life would allow, perform loving duties to their younger sisters; but the argument and advice include consideration rather of their claims than of their functions, and wisely limit the benefactions of the Church so as to preclude the dangerous element otherwise likely to have been unceremoniously obtruded upon them. Paul set his face as a flint against idleness and extortion, and if the Church at Ephesus, in following that at Jerusalem, was arranging "a daily ministration" for every widow *per se*, he pointed out its perils, and gave practical financial advice. He did not counsel Timothy to shut up the compassions of the Church to any suffering or destitution, of man or woman, widow or virgin, but he would not counsel the creation of a list of permanent beneficiaries, except under the following special and stringent conditions.

Let a widow be enrolled on the list who is not less than sixty years, the wife of one husband. The construction of the first of these clauses is unusual, but perfectly intelligible, and has been sufficiently discussed. It is said by Ellicott, Alford, and others that "contemporaneous polygamy" is here quite out of the question, and therefore nothing else can be meant than widows who were *univiræ*, and that thus the corresponding qualification (Chap. iii.) of bishops and deacons must be taken to be St. Paul's condemnation in their case of second marriages. If it were so, surely St. Paul's undoubted admission of second marriages—without the slightest vestige of taint or slur (Rom. vii., 1 Cor. vii.), together with the advice given in Verse 15 to the younger widows—makes this interpretation of the passage very doubtful. I

admit that a condemnation of *polyandry* is out of the question, just as a condemnation of *polygamy* in the third chapter is not conceivable; but it seems to me —with Huther, Bengel, Fairbairn, and others—to be far more probable that, in each case, St. Paul is laying emphasis on connubial fidelity and unblemished purity of manners during married life. The Roman matrons did pride themselves on being *univiræ*, and thus protested against the fatal facility of divorce, as well as other evils incident to Pagan society. The argument deduced from these expressions in favour of ascetic depreciation of the married state is altogether forced, so long as we possess elsewhere the opinion of Paul as to the sanctity of the connubial relation and his positive recommendation of second marriages in certain circumstances.[1]

Verse 10.—*If she be well reported of in respect of good deeds* (not only that there is nothing against her, but that her kindly beautiful actions must plead for her); *if she have brought up children* (not necessarily, from the choice of the word,[2] *her own* off-spring. She is not to be excluded by the simple fact of non-maternity, but only by the absence of a womanly heart of love towards children); *if she have entertained strangers*[3] (this does not necessarily imply that

[1] An interesting article in Dr. Smith's "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities," on "Digamy," shews at length how, early in the Christian Church, for the clergy of all ranks, second marriages were condemned, and recites the opinions of ecclesiastical writers as to the sin of second marriages among the laity. Thus Tertullian inveighed against them in his two books, "Ad Uxorem," in his treatise, "De Monogamia," &c. Clemens Alexandrinus and Origen, but not Augustine, adopted the same view. It is clear that the conciliar decisions in the same direction were based on an intensifying asceticism engrafted on Christianity.

[2] Ἐτεκνοτρόφησεν. [3] Ἐξενοδόχησεν.

she must have suffered a great reverse in her fortunes; for, it may be asked, Who are so hospitable to the poor and destitute, as those who are poor themselves? The willingness to serve, the spirit of sacrifice, and a loving trust in human nature are involved in this grace. It entered into Christ's own ideal representation of his own sheep (Matt. xxv. 35), and in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Chap. xiii. 2) a like expression is gilded with noble recompense); *if she have washed the feet of saints* (this refers to an Oriental method of entertainment, which, however, was generally rendered by menials. It had become, however, a proof of immeasurable love and deep humility when observed by the Lord Himself (John xiii. 1–10) on the night of his Passion. In this recommendation the practice need not be taken in the letter so much as in the spirit, which would render loving, even menial, service, if required, to one of the least of his disciples); *if she have relieved* (have been sufficiently strong, *i.e.*, to ward off a danger from) *the distressed; if she have followed after every good work* (has been *ready* to do even that which her strength would not allow her to accomplish, being in sympathy with all holy service); then let her, in her widowhood, be placed on your list of sacred honour. She is given to you as a precious bestowment of heavenly love; her loveliness of character and her goodness, her sorrowful history and her need, are claims you must not dare to trifle with. They are urged upon you by Him who is the Judge of the widow and the Father of the fatherless.

This ideal of holy living ought not to be passed by as a mere exegetical puzzle, or as a *crux* of

ecclesiastical controversy. It is a cabinet portrait of practical Christian life, and it sets in its jewellery of heaven an ideal picture drawn by the hand of an heroic master. The features he portrays include all godly self-restraints, a deep devout regard for the young and helpless, a profound self-forgetfulness, self-humiliation and generosity, both skill and promptitude to do the right, as well as eager search both after the objects of love and the reasons for sacrifice.

Verse 11.—*But younger widows decline to put on your roll.* Paul did not say that such might never be recipients of any alms from the Church, but he considered it undesirable to give young women the recognized position of those who were espoused to Christ and *entirely* dependent on his Church. The claims of the elder, as well as the responsibilities that might easily, in certain cases, arise out of them, were unsuitable to the younger women. Baur here labours hard to identify the widows (*χήραι*) with virgins (*πάρθενοι*) of early Church history and with an order of unmarried women such as that which is referred to in one of the most dubious of the letters of Ignatius. On this hypothesis Baur considers that he has another argument against the Pauline authorship of the Epistle. There is no need whatever to press this possible identification.

For when they have come to wax wanton against Christ, they desire to marry (again). There is uncertainty as to the text,[1] but we have little difficulty in preferring, with the Received Text, the sub-

[1] The reading of the Receptus is *καταστρηνιάσωσιν*, which has ℵCDKL in its favour.

junctive to the indicative mood.[1] The word used signifies the leading of a fast, lawless, ungovernable life. The element of licentiousness is involved in the word, but not necessarily or always so. Palm and Rost say that the verb, with the preposition (κατα), denotes, "to behave oneself haughtily against another."

Under strong worldly influences the younger widows would be tempted to become disobedient to their Master and Husband, Christ; and, under these circumstances, they will wish to marry, and will thus exclude themselves from the catalogue of widows to be honoured as "widows indeed."

Verse 12.—*Having* (bearing about with them) *a judgment*[2] *that*[3] *they have broken their first faith*, not their vow of widowhood, but of consecration to Christ. The "honour" given to the widows was one which made them the sacred charge of the Church; it must be conferred after long experience and careful inquiry. The younger widows could not have the same tests of character; they were exposed to greater temptations, not simply to break a supposed vow of widowhood, but to rush into worldly pleasures and sins, and thus trifle even with the covenant they had made with Christ.

Verse 13.—There are further reasons given for their non-admission on the roll. *Moreover, they*

[1] Alford here differs from Ellicott and Tischendorf, edition 8. But even when ἐαν is coupled with the subjunctive, it does not always, in New Testament Greek, suggest the probability of the occurrence of the circumstance named in the condition. See Jelf, "Greek Grammar," § 484.

[2] Not κατακρῖμα, "condemnation," but κρῖμα, "judgment."

[3] The ὅτι is not causal, as it would have been if κρῖμα had been used in the sense of κατακρῖμα,

learn, going about from house to house (of the members of the Church), *to be idle.*[1] Having no need to exert themselves and no home cares, they would be tempted by the charity of the Church to waste their own time and that of others; *and not only idle persons, but frivolous talkers and busybodies, speaking,* perhaps chattering,[2] *things which they ought not*—things which are not fitting.

Verse 14.—*I give it therefore* (since these things are so, the significance of οὖν) *as my counsel* (this word expresses more than a mere wish, or an opinion that it would be advisable[3]) *that the younger widows marry, bear children, rule the house.* This advice, or counsel, shews that Paul cannot be throwing even the faintest slur on a second marriage. Jerome and Augustine, hampered by the ascetic tendencies which subsequently influenced the Church, were careful to urge that this advice does not create a permanent law, and that all which the Apostle meant was that a second marriage was better than licentiousness. On the contrary, there is no reference even to licentiousness, in the ascetic sense of the word, but a warning against frivolousness, idleness, and talkativeness inconsistent with the responsibilities, sedateness, and sobriety of those who

[1] I take it as proved that μανθάνουσι must be taken to govern ἀργαί, not περιερχόμεναι, notwithstanding the awkwardness of the expression. Winer quotes a similar usage of μάνθανειν with σοφοί, from Plato, Euthyd. 276 b.

[2] The classical distinction between λάλειν and λέγειν, that the former includes the inarticulate language of lower animals, the latter confined to the speech of man, is not maintained in the New Testament. Still, there may be the hint contained in the word.

[3] Βούλομαι and θέλω are difficult to discriminate, though the former has the element of deliberation often involved. It is far less frequently used by St. Paul than the latter. *Cf.* the two verses, 12, 14.

are, or ought to be, the living expression of the sanctity of the Church. The Apostle would have these widows *give no occasion to the adversary for calumny.* The adversary need not mean the devil,[1] and there is no necessity to connect the "adversary" with the "reproach," thus making the calumny, or reproach, the essence of the adverse action. That this advice was not needless, he adds,—

Verse 15.—*For already some have been turned aside after Satan.* The class, as a class, are exposed to special danger. Certain ecclesiastical arrangements have aggravated their temptations, and, as a matter of fact, certain women have, by reason of the very listlessness fostered by the authorities, become a scandal to the Church.

Verse 16.—Then, as if to prove that this was the main idea in the mind of the writer, and that he had not been throughout speaking of any ascetic ecclesiastic institute, but of an *eleemosynary* fellowship of holy women, he adds—once more falling back on a principle already established—*If any believer, male or female, has widows* dependent on him or her for support, in virtue of any form of relationship, such as that of child, or mother, or sister, or intimate friend even, *let such relieve them, and let not the Church burden itself, that it may relieve those who are widows indeed.* It did not occur to the Apostle that poor Christian widows could be left to starve, but he was resolutely determined on the question that indiscriminate charity, in cases where the

[1] Leo translates: *Quo inimico ad calumniandum parato nullam præbeant occasionem. Cf.* Luke xiii. 17; 1 Cor. xvi. 9; Phil. i. 28. In 2 Thess. ii. 4, it is used for the "Man of Sin." *Cf.* Tit. iii. 8 with *ὁ ἐξ ἐναντίας.*

Church ought to be seconded by common sense, would lead to universal bankruptcy, serious temptation, and ugly scandal. The great prominence given to this subject leads one to ask for some explanation of the fact that there should have been so many widows in the Christian Churches of Jerusalem, Ephesus, and Corinth. The prominent attention called to them in Jerusalem may be due to the special injunctions which abound in the Old Testament as to the care and consideration which were demanded for them by the Lord. Special laws enacted that a widow's garment should not be taken in pledge (Deut. xxiv. 17). The heart of God seems to yearn over them (Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. xxvii. 19; Isa. i. 17; Jer. vii. 6). Neglect of widows was reprobated, care of them regarded as a religious duty (Isa. x. 2; Mal. iii. 5; Matt. xxiii. 14; *cf.* also James i. 27). But this hardly accounts for the great prevalence of widows in the Asiatic cities. (1) It may have arisen in part from the polygamous tendencies and practices which prevailed, and which must often on the death of one man have thrown a whole harem upon the charity of friends.[1] (2) War and hardship fell at this period with greater relative violence upon the men than upon the women. (3) Considered as a desolate and unbefriended class, many widows would have been among the earliest and most impressionable hearers of the Gospel of love, sacrifice, and sympathy. (4) It is clear that in later days

[1] Monogamy was, indeed, the law of Greece and Rome, and polygamy was not legal at Ephesus or Corinth; but where Oriental customs prevailed great looseness was allowed.

the term "widow" was used to denote those who, though virgins, were ranked among the class of widows. Apart from the passage in Ignatius (*ad.* Smyr. 13), to which I have already referred, Tertullian, "De Velandis Virginibus," speaks with disapproval of a virgin enrolled, though only twenty years of age, in the rank of widows.[1] The "Apostolic Constitutions" (Book ii. c. 4) declare that charitable distributions are to be made to necessitous persons, and wisely provides that sometimes a woman who has a husband is to be preferred. The author (Book iii.) expands into details the advice of this very chapter of St. Paul's Epistle, and gives much the same reasons for enrolment and non-enrolment which we have already considered. The bishop's duty is to make provision for the needy, distributing seasonably the oblations to every one of them, to the widows, to the orphans, &c. The widows' functions in the Church are "to pray for those that give and for the whole Church." They are not to teach, nor to discharge any ministerial duty, and they are expressly distinguished from the deaconesses (c. 7), whom they are called upon to obey. These "Constitutions" represent (in Books i.–vii.), according to Bunsen, the Church life of the close of the second and beginning of the third century. They are obviously built upon the injunctions contained in the Pastoral Epistles, and hence help to throw back the composition of the Epistles to a much earlier date. Every reference here to the widows confirms our general view of this passage.

H. R. REYNOLDS.

[1] *Cf.* Epiph. adv. Hær. L. iii. c. 79, § 4.

NOTES ON COMMENTARIES.

2. Job to Solomon's Song (*concluded*).

I have recently received from the publishers a Commentary on Books III. and IV. of the Psalter (Psalms lxxiii.–cvi.), by Messrs. Jennings and Lowe, which is not, I fancy, nearly so well known as it deserves to be.[1] At all events, I had not so much as heard of it till a few weeks ago, and even yet, for there is no preface to the volume, I am not aware whether or not these scholars have published any exposition of the earlier books. It is a cheap and compact little volume, admirably arranged and printed, and will prove of very special value to the student of Hebrew, since it deals very clearly and simply with the grammatical constructions and difficulties; and of hardly inferior value to the scholar, to whom grammar presents few difficulties, since it leans, as a rule, to the traditional and Rabbinical interpretations. These interpretations, however, are handled in a sober thoughtful way, their frequent extravagance being corrected by the sound good sense which characterizes English scholarship. And to have these ancient and Rabbinical readings, renderings, explanations, and comments brought within easy reach, will be no small boon to many a student and scholar who lives remote from libraries and can only, at the best, have occasional access to Targums, Talmuds, and Rabbinical commentaries. Even the purely English reader will find much in it that will repay careful perusal and examination.

With another Commentary on the Psalms I have been much disappointed, that of Dr. Kay.[2] Seeing it cited now and then by good authors, I hoped to have found it very serviceable. Candour compels me to say that neither does the translation commend itself to my taste nor do the notes to my judgment.

Perhaps I may be permitted to add that I have myself written an Exposition of the "Songs of Degrees," which has met with a very cordial reception from the critics.[3] My leading aim in it was to put these tiny gems of song in their true historical setting, and so to bring out not only their real historical sense, but also the poetic beauty and the spiritual wisdom with which they are rife.

On the *Book of Proverbs* we possess two Commentaries of great

[1] "The Psalms. With Introductions and Critical Notes." By A. C. Jennings, B.A., and W. H. Lowe, M.A. Macmillan and Co.

[2] "The Psalms, Translated from the Hebrew; with Notes, chiefly Exegetical." By William Kay, D.D. Rivingtons.

[3] "The Pilgrim Psalms." By Samuel Cox. Daldy, Isbister, and Co.

worth: the first, that of Delitzsch,[1] a translation of which has only just been published; the second, that of Professor Plumptre, published in Vol. IV. of "The Speaker's Commentary." That of Delitzsch, besides being marked by the admirable features which characterize all his work, and to which I have so often referred already, shews even more than his usual learning and erudition. It is a noble exposition of a most difficult Scripture. Like his Commentary on Job, moreover, it is enriched by valuable notes from the learned pens of Professor Fleischer and Dr. Wetzstein. The one drawback to its general use arises simply from the fact that Delitzsch has lavished his stores of learning and reading upon it with even a more liberal hand than he is wont to do: and hence, apart from some familiarity with Hebrew, and even with Arabic and Syriac, the student is likely to be constantly arrested and perplexed. If he be innocent of Oriental tongues, let him betake himself to the admirable Commentary of Professor Plumptre. He will find there exactly what he requires—the results of learning set forth with conspicuous ability and good sense. It is one of the best specimens of popular exegesis and exposition we possess.[2]

The best Commentaries on *Ecclesiastes* and *Solomon's Song*, of which I have any knowledge, are the well-known works of Dr. Ginsburg (published by Longmans), albeit they are not written in the most flowing or idiomatic English. To those who mean *work*, who have set themselves to master these scriptures, they can hardly be too highly commended. A volume entitled "The Quest of the Chief Good,"[3] based on Dr. Ginsburg's Commentary on Ecclesiastes, but also adding, it is hoped, something of its own —especially a readable translation and modern illustrations of the various moods of thought set forth in this ancient Scripture—may also be mentioned as likely, perhaps, to be useful to the general reader.

EDITOR.

[1] "Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon." By Franz Delitzch. Vols. I. and II. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark.

[2] "The Holy Bible, with an Explanatory and Critical Commentary, and a Revision of the Authorized Translation." By Bishops and other Clergy of the Anglican Church. Edited by Canon Cook. London: John Murray.

[3] "The Quest of the Chief Good; or, Expository Lectures on the Book Ecclesiastes, with a New Translation. By Samuel Cox." A Commentary for Laymen. Daldy, Isbister, and Co.

THE EXPOSITOR.

III. *THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS AFTER THE TIME OF SAMUEL.*

The headquarters of the schools of the sons of the prophets were, as we have seen, at Ramah, on the mountains of Ephraim, where Samuel dwelt (1 Sam. xix. 18–24). Other schools existed at Bethel, upon the same mountains, upon the road from Shechem to Jerusalem (2 Kings ii. 3); at Gibeah of Benjamin, not far from Ramah, translated "the hill" in 1 Sam. x. 5, 10; at Jericho, also in the tribe of Benjamin (2 Kings ii. 5, and probably Chap. vi. 1–7); and at Gilgal, apparently not the sacred spot near the Jordan, but one higher up among the mountains above Bethel (Chaps. ii. 1; iv. 38). "Two young men of the sons of the prophets," mentioned as coming to Elisha from Mount Ephraim, in Chap. v. 22, belonged probably to the college at Ramah. The whole, therefore, of the schools mentioned by name, excepting perhaps Gilgal, were at places closely connected with Samuel's history, and within a very limited range of country. But they are mentioned so casually that we are left to gather from other notices the probable number of the students and to infer the likelihood or otherwise of similar schools existing elsewhere.

Let me premise that the proper appellation for those educated in these schools was "the sons of the prophets." When Amos (Chap. vii. 14) denied that he was a prophet's son, he did not mean to say that his father was, or was not, a prophet, but that he himself had not received a prophetic education. The word *son* has a wide use in Hebrew. Where we speak of a person as thirteen years old, it speaks of him as "the son of thirteen years" (Gen. xvii. 25); where we speak of a calf, it says "a son of the herd" (ibid xviii. 7); and where we say "fifty strong men," it says "fifty sons of strength" (2 Kings ii. 16). Here son is a title implying mutual affection and respect. The head of the prophetic institutions was addressed as Father (2 Kings ii. 12; this is the most probable explanation also of 1 Sam. x. 12); the disciples were his sons. The appellation will be found in 1 Kings xx. 35; 2 Kings ii. 3, 5, 7, 15; iv. 1, 38; v. 22; vi. 1; ix. 1, in which last place it is wrongly translated "children;" and in all these passages it means, without reference to age, persons educated in the prophetic schools.

But there is little doubt that they were also often called simply "prophets." The previous appellation had reference to their education, and this to their profession. When Jezebel cut off "the prophets of the Lord," and "Obadiah hid a hundred of them" (1 Kings xviii. 4), we can scarcely doubt that by prophets are meant those who, after being educated at a prophetic college, subsequently practised the arts which they had learned there. They were the trained men of their day, and as such were the lawyers, the physicians, and the advisers of the people.

All such offices, too, as required education would be confided to them. There was thus a large class of secular employments which would fall to their lot. But they had also higher duties. Without claiming for them the gift of inspiration, it is evident that they were a deeply religious body of men, and were the teachers and preachers of their time. Here and there one like Elijah or Elisha towered above his fellows, and touched the heavenly heights by his special gift of being directly a speaker for God. But, unless the mass of them had been religious men, and the mainstay, even in Israel, of the Mosaic institutions, neither would Jezebel have persecuted them nor Obadiah have risked life and royal favour for their deliverance.

Their numbers must have been considerable. For when, at the very end of Ahab's reign, Jehoshaphat wanted to inquire of the word of Jehovah before going to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, no less than four hundred were gathered together before the allied kings and prophesied in Jehovah's name (1 Kings xxii. 11, 12). Jehoshaphat is dissatisfied with them; but we are not to conclude from this, that they were not, what they claimed to be, Jehovah-prophets. Jehoshaphat did not live so far from Samaria as not to know what went on there, and probably these were men who had saved their lives during Jezebel's persecution by some compromise. After the great day at mount Carmel the worship of Jehovah was publicly restored in Israel, and they came forth again to exercise their calling. Jehoshaphat, used to a more uncompromising state of things in Judea, naturally wishing to hear the word of the Lord from

some one not so well drilled as these four hundred seemed to be. We refer to the narrative, however, simply to shew the large numbers of those who had enjoyed the prophetic training. For though persecution had thinned their ranks with the sword, and sent even more into exile in Judea, whither there seems to have been a continual migration of such Israelites as clave unto Jehovah, yet in Samaria and its neighbourhood four hundred men could be found who, under the very eyes of the fanatic queen, professed to be prophets of Jehovah.

It would be no easy matter now, in our more densely peopled land, to assemble four hundred clergymen in a comparatively small country town like Samaria ; it would have been quite impossible immediately after the Marian persecution. Nor can I imagine whence Ahab obtained so large a number of reputed prophets, unless there had been some college in the neighbourhood of Samaria. Bethel, though removed by the whole width of the tribe of Ephraim, is not absolutely too far away. It was situated in the tribe of Benjamin, but belonged to Israel, and what in an earlier narrative we read of the Bethel prophets (1 Kings xiii. 18) does not give us a very high idea of their probity. They apparently made a compromise under Jeroboam with the calf-worship, and may have done the same under Ahab. But whether from Bethel or elsewhere, unless there had been some headquarters within reach, four hundred is a very large number of prophets to bring together upon such short notice. If, however, they came from some college, of which Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah was the head, all

the students would be counted and swell the roll. And one or two such colleges, added to such prophets as dwelt in Samaria, would supply the whole array.

For plainly these colleges were upon a large scale. Thus from that at Jericho fifty men go forth to watch the progress of Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings ii. 7); and when the latter returns without his master, they urge him to send "fifty strong men," apparently persons in their service, employed perhaps upon their lands, to seek for him (2 Kings ii. 16). Subsequently, in a time of famine, when it must have been very difficult to procure food for a large number of people at one place, we nevertheless find no less than a hundred assembled for a common meal (2 Kings iv. 43); and it is interesting to find that the first-fruits, which were consecrated to God, and belonged strictly to the priests (Deut. xxvi.), were supposed to be used with equal piety if given to "the man of God" who was for the time rector of the prophetic schools.

But probably the whole of the ground which Samuel, their founder, had made sacred by his circuits, and which lay conveniently upon the borders of both kingdoms, was studded with these schools. They would flourish or dwindle away as external circumstances were favourable or adverse, and in proportion to the reputation of their teachers. The great influence of Elijah and Elisha, who successively devoted themselves to their nurture, made the students more than ordinarily numerous in their days. Nor was their multiplication a matter of difficulty. The college, probably at Jericho, had become, we read,

overcrowded. The members ask Elisha's permission to provide better accommodation, and, with him at their head, they go forth and build for themselves a new lodging (2 Kings vi. 1–7), apparently as a succursal to their former buildings. And here let us notice the exactness of the language in the original Hebrew. When our Version (Chap. vi. 1) speaks of "the place where we dwell with thee," the Hebrew says "the place where we sit before thee." Elisha did not dwell with them, nor were they thinking of dormitories and refectories. He was perpetually on the move, going from one school to another (Chap. iv. 8), superintending everywhere the education given by the local teachers, and himself adding definite instruction in some special subject, and so crowning the labours of them all. And what they wanted to build was a lecture-room. For "to sit before him" was the attitude of the scholar, and gives us once again the picture of Elisha as their head, "standing, like Samuel of old, as appointed over them." We thus see that when their numbers increased, they themselves easily provided room for their new students.

It is from a series of narratives, or anecdotes, given us in relation to Elisha's management of these schools that we gather many interesting particulars concerning them. We have seen already in what manner the students at Jericho acknowledged the authority of Elisha when they saw that the spirit of Elijah rested upon him (2 Kings ii. 15). Now Elisha had probably studied for a time at some prophetic college; but, when his course was complete, he returned to his usual occupation, and was plough-

ing his father's lands at Abel-Meholah when Elijah in passing by cast his mantle over him. In the East men are quick in catching the meaning of symbolic acts, and the young farmer understood that he was henceforward to wear the prophetic dress. For the garb of those who claimed to be in an especial sense prophets was a rough loose robe of black camel's hair, girt with a leathern girdle about the loins (2 Kings i. 8; Zech. xiii. 4; Matt. iii. 4). From that time Elisha became Elijah's attendant and minister (2 Kings iii. 11), and after his translation devoted himself with unflagging energy to the prophetic schools, feeling, no doubt, that on them depended the maintenance of the Theocracy and of the institutions of Moses.

In one of these narratives we find Elisha multiplying a widow's oil to enable her to pay her debts (2 Kings iv. 1–7). It plainly follows that, after their education was completed, the "sons of the prophets" had to depend upon their own exertions for their living, and married, and prospered, or were unfortunate, like other men. Nor had they any special exemptions. The creditor came to take the prophet's two sons as bondsmen, to serve till the year of jubilee (Lev. xxv. 41), as he would the sons of any one else. Nor had Elisha any corporate property out of which he could relieve the poor woman, but multiplied miraculously a little oil, which she had in the house, to deliver her from her poverty. In the same Chapter (verse 9) we find Elisha journeying continually backwards and forwards by Shunem. Now this village lay in the tribe of Issachar, far to the north of the regions which Samuel visited, near Mount

Gilboa, and in the vicinity of the favourite palace of the Kings of Israel at Jezreel. What was it which brought Elisha so frequently to the far north? As Carmel lay about thirty miles to the west of Shunem, it is not at all unlikely that there were schools of the prophets also upon this hill, so fitted by nature for such a use. We may feel sure that these visits of the Prophet, paid so regularly, were for some definite purpose, and nothing is more probable than that he had disciples there in training for Jehovah's service among the northern tribes, just as those upon the mountains of Ephraim were trained for similar service in the south.

From Shunem he returns to Gilgal, where we learn some particulars of what befell during the seven years' famine of which Elisha had prophesied (Chap. viii. 1). So severe was it that the rich family at Shunem withdrew with their household into the land of the Philistines during its continuance; and sorely must the prophetic colleges have suffered at such a time. It so happened on a day that one of the scholars searching for herbs came upon a bed of the wild colocynth. (Canon Tristram[1] tells us that all round Gilgal and the Dead Sea the colocynth cucumber grows abundantly in the barren sands, and will flourish in the extremest drought.) This young man must have been a newcomer, or he would have known the plant and its qualities. As it is, he takes home his mantle full of the fruit; but when the students taste the pottage, its bitterness makes them think that it is poisoned. Elisha sprinkles meal into the pot, and miraculously

[1] "Natural History of the Bible," p. 452.

converts the contents into wholesome food. For our present purpose the interesting point is that the sons of the prophets evidently had a common meal. Now this is the very centre of our own collegiate life. The members not on the foundation of any college at Oxford or Cambridge are even called "Commoners," from being admitted to participate in it. We conclude, therefore, that the prophetic colleges had something of a corporate existence, with common revenues and with orderly rules for their maintenance and control. Without considerable resources they could not have tided over so trying a time. At the end of the Chapter, when the farmer of Baal-Shalishah has brought first-fruits, not for the college, but for the man of God at its head, and he orders them to be set before the students, we find that, in spite of the famine, the common table is still set for a hundred men. It is the proximity of this village which makes it probable that Gilgal lay to the north of Bethel, and there are several indications that Elijah's house was there. If so, a prophetic college would naturally grow up around it. Let me also notice the direct proof that Elisha taught the students in person. In Chap. iv. 38 we read that "the sons of the prophets were sitting before him." As noticed above, this was the regular attitude of the scholars. Squatting cross-legged upon the floor they would read their lesson or write, holding the material upon the palm of the left hand, or trace figures upon the sand.

From the narrative of the building of the lecture-room (Chap. vi. 1–7) we gather that these colleges were not wealthy institutions. The students go

themselves to obtain the timber wherewith to erect the new room. Moreover, they have no community of goods; for one, we read, was working with a borrowed axe, and when it fell into the river the loss seemed to him irreparable. But probably they possessed lands, tilled partly by the young men and partly by tenants who shared with them the produce (Chap. ii. 16). But when the students came from their homes, all probably brought with them such gifts as they could afford: and offerings of food were probably made to the heads of these colleges by the wealthier landholders around. For, let me add, they were decidedly popular institutions. They belonged to no class or special order. Every one was welcome, and the education offered was open to all. It bound no one for future life. He might return to his usual occupations, or he might assume the mantle of camel's hair, as he chose. As "prophecy came not by the will of man" (2 Pet. i. 21), no restrictions could be put upon it. Both in its higher and its lower aspect it was free, untrammelled, unconfined. It flourished in Israel as largely as in Judah; and the Spirit of God, which bloweth where it listeth, poured down large blessings upon the sons of the prophets in the northern kingdom, and used them for the maintenance of the truth there at a time when all other privileges had been withdrawn, or exercised but little influence.

It is not the manner of Holy Scripture to give us direct information upon the many points relating to the internal habits and manners of the people, which would be to us most interesting. Too profoundly occupied with its one great purpose, it does not stop

in its course merely to increase our secular knowledge; and thus what we know of the training and mode of life of the prophets has to be gathered from incidental allusions dropped in narratives chiefly occupied with other things. There remains one more such allusion, already briefly adverted to. Amos, a native of Tekoa, a village twelve miles south of Jerusalem, upon the very border of the great western desert, had gone on a special mission to Israel. It was then governed by Jeroboam II., the greatest monarch of the house of Jehu, and a nominal worshipper of Jehovah, but only so far as Jehovah was symbolized by the golden calves. But besides this central sin, moral corruption was fast spreading among the ten tribes and threatening the kingdom with ruin. In vain were all the victories of the warlike king. His throne was tottering to its fall.

And God gave the Israelites one last vehement call to repentance. Amos, in hurried circuit, like some revivalist preacher, visited all parts of the country, and so earnest was his appeal and men's hearts so stirred that "the land was not able to bear all his words" (Amos vii. 10). Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel, is indignant, and complains to the king, and also appeals to Amos, bidding him consult for his own safety, by returning to Judea, there to eat his bread and prophesy (verse 12). The words were of course intended to suggest that Amos was prophesying for money, and that he would be more likely to earn it peaceably in Judea than at Bethel. For "Bethel was a royal sanctuary, and for the time the capital, where the king dwelt." At such a place the

royal power would not permit the vagaries, as Amaziah deemed them, of a foreign prophet.

The answer of Amos meets Amaziah at every point. "I am," he says, "no prophet, neither am I a prophet's son; but I am a herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit" (verse 14). Our Version has wrongly inserted a past tense. Amos really speaks of the present: I am at this moment no prophet professionally. I do not wear the black camel's hair cloak and leathern girdle. Consequently I receive no fees, nor gifts. I have, too, my own means of subsistence. They may not be large, but they are enough. I have cattle, sheep, and fruit-trees. On their produce I was living, when a direct command came to me to bear God's message to Israel. I have obeyed, but not for earthly reward. And when my mission is over I shall return to my former method of life.

It follows, therefore, that the prophets received gifts for their services (see also Micah iii. 11), not the inspired men who had a message directly from God, but those of the meaner sort; and from the indignant denunciation of them by Micah we gather that these fees had proved a snare to the order generally. Next we learn that the prophetic schools existed at this time as ordinary things. Amaziah, hearing that Amos prophesied, assumed, as a matter of course, that he had been educated with "the sons of the prophets," but is undeceived. Finally, though Amos had not been thus trained, he was not therefore an illiterate man. On the contrary, his Book, though marked by some diversities of spelling from the common mode and by

a few of what we should call provincialisms, is a work of no common literary merit; and his metaphors, borrowed from country life, are used with the utmost skill and judgment. It appears that the Jews in the days of King Uzziah were a highly educated people, when thus a herdsman of limited means is so well able to manage the pen. The days of Uzziah and Jotham were indeed the palmy days of Judah; still it is plain that Samuel's foundations had ended in educating the mass of the people. And this education was carried on, I believe, by men trained in the prophetic schools; and Amos, though he had never been to a college, had, I doubt not, obtained his learning from those who had been so taught, and who, dispersed throughout the land, were the teachers of the whole Jewish youth.

I have endeavoured in these papers to give a concise account of the educational institutions of the Israelites, which, starting from the wise forethought of Samuel, ended in making the Jews one of the most highly cultivated peoples of ancient times. When the Assyrians invaded Palestine they destroyed a civilization far in advance of anything that ever existed on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates. To a certain extent it revived after the exile at Babylon, but never reached again that perfection to which it had attained in the days of Hezekiah and his immediate ancestors. We have in our Bibles the eternal results of this culture. But for Samuel's schools, the Psalms of David, and the Prophecies of Isaiah and Hosea, of Joel, Amos, and Micah, would have been, humanly speaking,

impossible, and the Jews unfit for their high destiny of teaching mankind the truth. I trust, therefore, it will not have been without its interest to trace these secondary means by which the Jewish race was made fit for its office of teachers; and if we are to judge of these schools by their fruit, they must have been admirably fitted not only to preserve the patriotic enthusiasm of the people and to deepen their religious fervour, but also to kindle their genius and imbue them with sentiments not merely just and true, but also intensely poetic. But with all its fervour the poetry of the Jews is regulated by the most exact taste and expresses itself in language chosen with the utmost care. It is no small meed of praise that we must bring to the man whose wise heart laid the foundations on which were built such glorious results.

R. PAYNE SMITH.

THE DOOM OF THE CHILDREN OF BETHEL.

2 KINGS ii. 23, 24.

FEW of the Scripture narratives are more perplexing and revolting than this. Little children, two-and-forty of them, ruthlessly destroyed for the mere utterance of a jibe! I suppose no man ever read the story yet without being shocked by the disproportion between the offence and its punishment. If forty or fifty of our children were crushed and maimed by a railway accident, a thrill of horror and pity would run through the heart of universal England. And *this* was no accident, but a deliberate act of vengeance. The Prophet "*turned and looked*" at

the children, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. His curse evoked two she-bears from the wood which skirted the road, who tore and crushed the hapless little lads, leaving them half, if not altogether, dead. The Prophet went on his way through the wood to Carmel,—the rustling leaves quivering with horror as he passed and whispering to each other the dreadful tale,—passing by the poor mangled frames scattered on the road and among the trees, giving no succour, uttering no word of ruth or regret. And we are asked to see in this man a man of God, a friend and servant of Him who is full of all compassion!

It only adds new shades of mystery to the narrative to remember that Elisha was one of the most gentle and kindly of the goodly fellowship of the prophets, that his miracles, unlike those of his great predecessor, were almost invariably miracles of succour and healing. He sweetens the bitter spring of Jericho. He multiplies the oil in the widow's slender cruse. To the hospitable Shunammite he gives a son. He makes the poisonous mess of pottage wholesome and succulent. He saves the host of the three kings. Even when he is laid in the grave he still gives life,—a poor dead man hastily cast into the Prophet's tomb reviving and standing up. And this is the man who cursed little children so that they died!

Now we must not expect, we should not wish, to discharge the Bible narratives of all severity. Human life is full of hard conditions and cruel changes. And if the Bible is to correspond with human life, and apply itself to our actual conditions

and needs, we must look to find in it much of mystery, much even of austerity. Nevertheless we do not expect to find "a man of God" transported with passion and revenge; and still less can we admit that God would put his power at the beck of base and malignant passions. How, then, are we to read this narrative so as to vindicate the ways of God to man, so as to find in it, not a malignant act of revenge, but a solemn and deserved judgment, and even a mercy that rejoices in and over judgment?

Several attempts have been made to explain and vindicate the narrative, no one of which, I think, does more than lighten the difficulty; few of them do so much as that.

Calmet, for example, suggests that the children did not die, that they may have been torn and lacerated, and yet survive. But there is little comfort in his suggestion. For children, "*little* children," torn and hugged by bears, the only mercy would be speedy or immediate death.

Some Commentators have argued that the word here translated "children" often means "young men," and that we are not therefore to suppose that the malediction was pronounced on boys, who knew not what they did, but on youths,—certain "loose fellows," as Keil calls them,—who deliberately intended to insult and deride the servant of the Lord. But the epithet "little" (*ketannim*) prefixed to the word "children" renders such a reading inadmissible; and even were it admissible, it would but lighten, not remove, the difficulty. No doubt it is the thought of so frightful a decree falling on a bevy of little fellows piping out, "Go up, bald-head; go

up, bald-head," innocent of any intentional disrespect to God, guilty indeed of nothing more than gay spirits and bad manners, which most of all shocks us in the narrative; but if the little children *had* been a group of wild lads, trained in idolatry and vice, who meant to insult the Prophet, and to shew that they preferred the easy worship of the Groves to the sober and exacting service of Jehovah, yet, so soon as we remembered how irresponsible most lads and youths are for their religious preferences, how surely they addict themselves to the forms and observances in which they have been nurtured, we should still have been struck with the disproportionate punishment of their offence, though we might admit that the narrative was not quite so difficult and repulsive as before. Even this relief is denied us, however. It was not only "children," but "*little* children," whom the Prophet cursed.

Other Commentators have remarked that in this incident we probably have an organized attempt on the part of the idolatrous section of the Israelites to bring discredit on the ministry of Elisha from its very outset, "to make the new head of the class of the prophets ridiculous and contemptible at the very commencement of his career" (Lange's "Bible-Work"); and that, therefore, it may have been necessary to shew to those who opposed him a severity not requisite afterwards, lest his work should be arrested and brought to nought before it was well begun. Now it must be admitted that the first steps of any great enterprise are commonly the most difficult, and that those who have opposed such enterprises at the outset have often been treated with an exceptional

severity: witness the doom which fell on Ananias and Sapphira in those early days when the Church of Christ was springing into power. And yet we can hardly believe that the career of Elisha would have been wholly marred if the jest of the children of Bethel had gone unrebuked, or, at least, if the rebuke had been somewhat less austere. This hypothesis, like the last, only lightens the difficulty; it is very far from removing it.

Still, other of the Commentators appear to flatter themselves that they have discharged the passage of all difficulty when they have shewn that the sin of these children was punished, not by Elisha, but by Jehovah Himself. Thus the learned Dr. Bähr says: "It was no more Elisha who caused the bears to come (but Jehovah, verse 21) than it was he who caused the waters at Jericho to become healthful. It was a judgment of God which befell these depraved youths and, indirectly, the whole city out of which they came, and it referred back to that threat of the law, 'If ye walk contrary to me, and will not hearken to me, . . . I will also send *wild beasts* among you, *which shall rob you of your children*, and destroy your cattle, and your highways shall be desolate, (Leviticus xxvi. 21, *seq.*)." Now I am far from denying that the curse was *executed* by Jehovah, though it was pronounced by Elisha. No doubt God spake by and through Elisha, or the curse would have fallen back from the insulted heavens on the head of the passionate irritable man who could not endure to be called names, or thought his career put in jeopardy by the sportive derision of a few little children. But is it not strange that those

who attribute the doom of these poor children to Jehovah, do not see that, in that case, the apparent cruelty of the doom grows all the more shocking to us, and needs more than ever to be explained and vindicated? We might conceive of a man, even a man of God, being carried away by ungovernable passion into a sudden madness of revenge, with no worse result than that our respect for him would be seriously abated; but to believe that God Himself is revengeful and cruel would be nothing short of spiritual death.

Can we, then, since all the explanations hitherto offered us have failed to satisfy us, hit on one for ourselves which shall banish from our hearts the haunting sense of discomfort and disapproval with which this narrative, as commonly read, inspires us? Let us at least try for one.

We must remember, then, that it was in Bethel that Jeroboam, "who made Israel to sin," had set up one of the golden calves; and that in the time of Elisha the city was wholly given to idolatry, insomuch that it was known to the prophets as Beth-Aven, *i.e.*, "House of the Idol," instead of Beth-El, *i.e.*, "House of God." In such a city it is easy to understand that the prophets of the Lord would be unwelcome visitors; that their sayings would be made the theme of many a jest, and that even their miracles would be matter for sceptical debate and derision. "As the old birds sing, so the young ones twitter," says a fine proverb; and if the men of Bethel habitually made a mock of the prophets, we cannot wonder that the children of Bethel, consciously or unconsciously, caught up the

tone of their elders. The "little children" could hardly be responsible for crying out, "Go up, bald-head; go up, bald-head," after Elisha in the streets and roads, when their parents were constantly sneering and mocking at the prophets who denounced their sins.

But what did the children mean by the mock—"*Go up*, bald-head; *go up*, bald-head"? why did their derision take this form rather than any other? I doubt whether sufficient attention has been paid to this point. Perhaps the very secret of the story may lie hidden here. The term "baldhead" admits of an easy explanation. As Elisha lived fifty years after this visit to Bethel he could hardly as yet have been bald from age. Probably his partial baldness—for, as the children come behind and call him "bald-patch," we may infer that he was bald only at the back of his head—was due to some natural defect or infirmity. We know how eagerly children in their sportive and derisive moods seize on any such deformity, however slight, or indeed on any unusual feature, and make a mock of it, without much thought of the pain they may give; and therefore it is only too easy to understand why the boys of Bethel called Elisha "bald-patch," or "bald-head." Possibly, too, the contrast between Elisha and his master may have been in their minds, since "the long shaggy hair" which "flowed over the back" of Elijah appears to have been a notable feature in his personal appearance (2 Kings i. 8).[1] But what did they mean by the

[1] See Dean Stanley's "Lectures on the Jewish Church," vol. ii. lect. 30.

"*Go up, go up*"? Of course it is open to us to say that, as Elisha climbed the low hill on which Bethel stood, they simply meant "go up the hill;" or, as our boys might call out, "Climb away, bald-head." But I venture to think that the childish mock had a far deeper meaning than this, although the children themselves may have been unconscious of it, or conscious of it only in part. The ascension of Elijah had recently taken place,—his *going up* into heaven. Some report of that strange event had doubtless reached Bethel ere this, if only through the "sons of the prophets," who had a school at Bethel;[1] *they* had known that the Lord was about to "take away" their "master" (2 Kings ii. 3), and had convinced themselves by a protracted and zealous search that he was no longer on earth (ibid. 16–18). It is easy to conceive with what incredulity the idolatrous inhabitants of Bethel would listen to the story of that fiery assumption into heaven, how many jests they would break over it, how the *going up* of Elijah would become the town talk, the standing jest of the place. Children quickly pick up new phrases, and it is not difficult to believe that the children of Bethel would soon be calling out to *each other* even, "*Go up*, So-and-so; *go up!*" making sport of each other and of the strange story they had heard, and feigning to expect that those whom they thus addressed would forthwith spread their wings and take their flight heavenward. If this were so, and it may well have been so, the sight of Elisha approaching the city must have

[1] Indeed there were many schools of the prophets in the vicinity of Bethel, as the Dean of Canterbury shews in the present number of THE EXPOSITOR.

been a temptation too great for the idle boys of Bethel to withstand. The chance of calling out, "*Go up, go up,*" after *him* was one which they would be sure to take. To bid him follow his master to the skies, to pretend that they expected him to fly upward, and thus at once to deride the story they had heard and the Prophet whom they had been taught to dislike, must have seemed "exquisite fooling" to them. There is no need to suppose that the men of Bethel deliberately set their children on to utter this mock, though many Commentators find signs in the narrative that they had carefully pre-arranged this insult to the Prophet, and instructed their children to utter it; the children, after what they had heard, would be quick enough to invent and ready enough to employ it. Knowing Elisha to be gifted with extraordinary powers, the inhabitants of Bethel *may* have dreaded to offend him by insulting him themselves; they may have been cowardly enough to set their little children on to insult him, hoping that the insult might pass for a mere sally of childish rudeness. But even if the children "came forth" of their own accord,[1] unbidden and untaught by their parents, yet the allusion to the "going up" of Elijah must have been caught from their parents' lips, and shews how they regarded the most solemn and impressive fact of their age. In short, it is as an exponent of the general scepticism and scornful contempt of the men of Bethel for the prophets and the service of Jehovah that we must view the

[1] It is on the Hebrew verb rendered "came forth" that some Expositors lay emphasis, finding in it indications of pre-arrangement and even of rehearsal.

jibe of their children if we would either understand or vindicate the doom inflicted on them.[1]

Think, then, what the translation of Elijah was,—how solemn and sublime a fact, how pregnant with the most momentous consequences! Life and immortality had not then been brought to light by the Gospel. Death was still an unsolved problem, an inscrutable mystery. Duly considered, Elijah's translation would have thrown more light on this mystery and have more effectually shorn it of its terrors than any other fact recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. Here was a man who, without seeing death, had gone up—body and soul, a complete and perfect man—into the unseen world. No one who believed in this translation, this transfiguration,

[1] No *proof* can be adduced that the "*go up*" of the children was an allusion to the *going up* of Elijah; but, in addition to the probabilities suggested in the text, it may be worth while to mention that the Hebrew verb (עֲלֵה) translated "go up" in verse 23 is closely akin to, and probably comes from, the same root with the verb (עָלָה) in verse 11, which describes how Elijah "went up" into heaven. (See Gesenius on עָלָה). It will be seen from this very number of THE EXPOSITOR that the indications I have given and suggested in favour of this interpretation fail to carry conviction to many minds. See, for example, Mr. Hammond's note on page 465. Till I received his Paper on the Vindictive Psalms I was not aware that the interpretation had been suggested by Abarbanel, or adopted by later Commentators, but flattered myself that I was working out an entirely original conception. But I am glad to have their authority for it, glad also that the readers of THE EXPOSITOR should have both sides of the question put fairly before them. It is a question which every student must determine for himself, and determine not so much by the preponderating weight of argument,—for there is little that is to be called "argument" in the strict sense of the word on either side,—but by the historical probabilities of the case and his knowledge of how men and children are influenced by the conditions and facts of their experience. To me, I confess, the reading of the story given above still seems to be by far the more likely of the two.

of a living man could any longer have taken death to mean annihilation, or could well have doubted that the righteous would live on, uninjured by death, in the joys of the Divine Presence. Hints even of the imperishableness of the bodily form might have been gathered from it. The men of Bethel might have known, what even most of the Hebrew Prophets and Psalmists knew only in the moments of their highest inspiration, that the holy and the good would not see corruption, nor be left to flit, thin ghosts, through the dim Hadean world, but that to be "gathered to their fathers" was to enter on a vital and immortal fellowship. The assumption, the going up, of Elijah was the most impressive, momentous, and hopeful fact of their time. And there was no lack of evidence for it. "Fifty men of the sons of the prophets" had "stood to view" the scene, had beheld him go up on high. Their "school" was close at hand, *i.e.*, the college in which they lived and studied. And yet the men of Bethel turn the most solemn fact of their time into a sorry jest! they habitually speak of it, and teach their children to speak of it, in mockery and contempt! "Go up, bald-patch," is *their* commentary on the most signal and splendid event of which they had ever heard! Can we wonder that the anger of God was kindled against men so sunk and steeped in sin?

But it may be objected, "If the parents, and not the children, were responsible for the sin, if the little children of Bethel did but shew a spirit, or repeat a jest, they had caught from their fathers, why was the curse pronounced, why was the punishment inflicted, on the children and not on their parents?" Such

an objection *may* be taken, I say; but if it be, it can only spring from want of thought, or from the dull unspiritual way in which we commonly conceive the facts of life and death. *Was* there, then, no mercy in the malediction? no mercy for the misguided children? no mercy even for their guilty parents? Did not the curse virtually fall, was not the punishment really inflicted, on the men and women who had virtually committed the offence?

Is not early death, in almost every case, a blessing—a blessing sadly disguised from the bereaved parents indeed, but still a blessing? May not Schiller's fine saying, "Death happens to all, and cannot therefore be an evil," be modified thus? One-third of the human race die in infancy; that which befalls so large a portion of the human race, under the righteous rule of God, cannot be an evil, must be a good. And if we turn from logic to experience, do any, even the best of us, when once we have become conscious of our personal being and responsibility, find life in this world so easy and blessed a condition that we should passionately crave it either for ourselves or for those whom we love? To be taken from the depressing anxieties and feverish excitements, the weary labours and the never-ending conflicts in which we so often suffer defeat; to pass at once from the heaven which lies all about us in our infancy to the heaven of God; to rise, undimmed and unenfeebled by care and bitter memories and exhausting struggles, into that inner Paradise where the little ones and their angels do always behold the face of our Father,—is not this a happiness to gain which even the brief agony of an early death may

well be endured? And if we have this consolation for *all* little children who are taken from us, does it not apply with special force to the forty-and-two little children of Bethel? With *such* homes and such parents, trained to do evil even before they could distinguish between evil and good, why should we shudder, or murmur, because they were snatched swiftly and painfully from the evil to come? Had they lived they could hardly but have "walked in the counsel of the ungodly, and stood in the way of sinners, and sat in the seat of the scornful." Dying, they passed, through a brief agony, from the base and degrading influence of idolatrous homes to the pure and kindly nurture of the home in the heavens.

The curse, then, severe and cruel as it seems, was not without its mercy for the children of Bethel. Was there no mercy in it also for their guilty parents? *They* might have been punished for their sins in their own persons; and then they would have had no more space for repentance: but, punished in their children, their punishment became a call to repentance. Impressively, severely even, they were taught by the loss of their children that God will "by no means clear the guilty;" but they were also taught that He does not "desire the death of a sinner," in that they were spared while yet they were punished, and allowed some little space in which to "turn and live." If anything would inspire them with a salutary awe of sinning against God, it would be the doom which had fallen on their little ones: if anything would win them to penitence, it would be that, while the innocent were taken, they, the guilty, were left.

On the whole, then, I do not think we need any longer regard the doom of the children of Bethel as a mysterious problem before which we can only stand perplexed and shocked, seeing no glimpse of meaning in it, no touch of mercy. Interpreted *thus*, it is no exceptional case; it falls into the same category with most of the judgments recorded in Holy Writ, and presents the same divine characteristic, "mercy rejoicing against" and over "judgment."

S. COX.

THE PARABLE OF THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD.

ST. MATTHEW XX. 1–16.

I HAVE read with much interest Mr. Sanday's valuable exposition of this parable, which appeared in THE EXPOSITOR for February.[1] But many years ago I was led to adopt a somewhat different line of interpretation. I say "adopt," because I lay no claim to originality in the view which I propose to offer, a view, however, which differs from that of most of the Commentators. I propose to shew *that the time spent in labour represents the amount of labour; and that the amount of labour represents the amount of sacrifice*. This I take to be the key to the Parable.[2]

One thing is quite certain,—that the Parable is intended to illustrate the principle laid down in the

[1] Pages 81–101 of the present Volume.

[2] As Mr. Hill appears to me to have lit on a valuable expository thought, which many of us have overlooked, mainly, I believe, from its very simplicity and obviousness, I am happy to offer his brief Paper to the readers of THE EXPOSITOR, as a supplement to the still more valuable Essay of Mr. Sanday—with Mr. Sanday's entire concurrence. At the same time I doubt whether he, or any of us, have as yet found the sole and true key to the parable. Many keys are in our hands

last verse of the previous Chapter (St. Matt. xix. 30), viz., that "many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." And the question for us to solve is, What do these words mean?

Now if we consider them in their connection with the preceding context, their meaning would seem to be this: That many who are first—that is, greatest—in the amount of worldly sacrifice they make for Christ's sake, will be the last—that is, the lowest—in the amount of reward they receive. Why? Simply because, not the amount only, but also the character, the quality, of the sacrifice has to be taken into account. In the Judgment, at the last day, the Lord will consider not only the outward works a man has done and the sacrifices he has made, but also the inward motives which have impelled him, the spirit by which he has been animated.

This I take to be the principle which the Parable was designed to illustrate. Let us see whether it does not spring naturally from the occurrence related in the previous Chapter and the conversation to which it gave rise. A rich young Ruler had gone sorrowfully away from the presence and service of Christ because, though he loved truth and righteousness and was set on life eternal, he could not bring himself to part with his great possessions. On which the Lord Jesus — beginning to make excuse for one who could make no excuse for him-

which give entrance to parts of the parable; but no such master-key, I think, as will open all its doors. For myself I know of none which lets us so far into it as this: *In the service of God our labour is its own best reward; so that those who have most of the work may well be content with least of the wage:* unless indeed our wage, or reward, be a larger and finer capacity for service; in that case we might well each of us seek to be the most ambitious soul alive.—ED.

self—sighed, and said to his amazed disciples, that it was very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, since it was very difficult for the rich not to trust in riches. Peter asked, "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee: what shall we have therefore?" And our Lord replied that Peter and his brethren should have a very high and special reward; and, further, that whosoever made any sacrifice for his sake should receive a hundredfold.

Now had our Lord stopped there, had He left this great saying without any qualification, it might have been fruitful in errors and evil consequences. He might have been understood to sanction the radical mistake that the Divine Judgment will turn on mere outward acts, and not on the inward disposition and motive which prompted them. A hireling spirit might have been engendered. Men might have deemed that the rewards of the future were to be bought—so much sacrifice, so much reward; and that God would not regard the motives from which their works were done. Whereas St. Paul assures us that, even though we should bestow all our goods upon the poor and give our bodies to be burned, it will profit us nothing, if we have not charity. In his wisdom, therefore, our Lord added to his promise of reward the grave caution, "*But* many that are first shall be last, and the last first:" that is to say, many who have made the largest sacrifices, and on that account stand first and foremost in the eyes of men, will receive the lesser reward and stand lowest in the estimation of God. Why? Because the Righteous and Omniscient Judge will have respect to the whole character of men, and not

merely to the overt acts in which that character is but partially and imperfectly expressed.

Having laid down this principle, the Lord Jesus proceeds to illustrate it by a Parable. The Parable marks diversity of character in the Labourers called to work in the Vineyard. The first-called *made a bargain* with the Householder; they would not go in till their wages were fixed. They may have been skilful and industrious workmen; but they were lacking in inward quality, deficient in character; they were wanting in generosity and trustfulness, and would not stir a step till the bargain was struck. The other Labourers were men of a different stamp: *they* made no bargain; with native and simple generosity they committed themselves to the promise of the Householder, "Go ye into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you." They relied on the justice and honour of their Employer, and so shewed that they themselves were not destitute of honour and justice. Accordingly, they were remunerated, not in exact proportion to their actual work, but rather in the measure of the character they had displayed. For although all the Labourers received the same sum, they were nevertheless—nay, therefore—very differently paid, since they were engaged at different hours of the day. In point of fact those who had done the most work got the least pay, while those who had done the least work got the most pay. These last, therefore, stood first in the estimation of the Householder; and that, apparently, because of the less mercenary, the more generous and trustful, spirit they had shewn.

If, then, in interpreting the Parable, we take the

time spent in labour as standing for the amount of labour, and the amount of labour as standing for the sacrifices which a man makes in order that he may serve Christ, we shall find that it most clearly and admirably illustrates the principle laid down in Chapter xix. verse 30, viz., that many who have left much, made many sacrifices, for Christ's sake and the Gospel's may receive the lower reward, whilst many who have left little, and made but few sacrifices, may receive the greater reward. And it was of grave moment that this principle should be clearly and emphatically set forth. Peter had just said, "Behold, we have forsaken all to follow thee: what shall we get for it?" as if the measure of the final reward were to be determined solely by the quantity of toil and sacrifice. To warn him against that error, to warn us through him, our Lord shews that men are not to be rewarded solely according to their outward acts of service, that the quality of their spirit and motives is to be taken into account no less than the quantity or amount of their service.

And mark how important it is that this principle should be recognized. Otherwise, what hope would there be for the poor, for those who have little or nothing that they can give up—not even a boat and nets? Were it in their power, they might be as ready as any to part with wealth or worldly goods. But though that is not in their power, it is in their power to shew, like the later-called Labourers, a more generous confidence in the Master, a more loving faith. To them, therefore,—that is, to the vast majority of men—this Parable is full of welcome instruction and consolation. On the other hand,

if this principle were not recognized, rich men might be led to think that heaven was to be purchased. The amount of their alms-deeds, their gifts, and sacrifices would engross their attention; the formation of a noble and refined character would be neglected, the possession of it count for little: and thus a fanatical spirit of voluntary poverty would be engendered which, while it has a show of piety, tends in reality to self-righteousness and spiritual pride.

There are many humble and generous, pure and loving, servants of Christ in high station and possessed of great wealth, who rightly continue to hold their station and both to use and to enjoy their wealth to the end of their days. They have received no command to give them up: in the secrecy of their own spirit they may have received the command to serve Christ, not by abandoning them, but by using them for Him and enjoying them as his gift. And these, too, are assured by this Parable that they shall in nowise lose their reward. To use our gifts and possessions for Christ is far harder than to give them up to Him, whether our gifts be many or few, whether our possessions be small or great. Those who do thus use them may seem to the world, and, alas, even to the Church, to be "standing idle" —to be immeasurably inferior to those who give much and renounce much. Nevertheless they may be shewing a simpler faith, a nobler integrity, a warmer love, a more disinterested and arduous devotion to their Master; and so, though counted last and least by men, they may stand among the first and foremost when Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe on Him.

F. T. HILL.

THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

VII.—LAODICEA. (*Rev.* iii. 14–22.)

THE position of Laodicea, on the banks of the Lycus, within a short distance of Hierapolis and Colossæ, brought the Church of that city within the range, if not of the direct influence, of St. Paul's personal teaching, at least under that of those who had been taught by him, and of an Epistle specially addressed to it. If we accept the words of Col. ii. 1 in their natural meaning, the members of that Church were as dear to his heart and filled him with as profound emotion as any could do who had not "seen his face in the flesh." To them, from his Roman prison, he had sent a letter, probably by the same messenger that carried the Epistle to the Colossians. (Col. iv. 16.) The question whether it was a letter exclusively for them, or that which we know as the Epistle to the Ephesians, considered as an encyclical letter to the Asiatic Churches, and reaching them in due course, is one which we need not now discuss. It will be enough to remember that a letter written at the same time as those to the Churches of Ephesus and Colossæ would, probably, in the nature of things, treat of the same subjects and be written in the same tone. Those to whom it was addressed would learn to think of Christ as of One in whom dwelt "the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9); in whom, "in the fulness of time, all things were to be gathered together, both which are in heaven and which are on earth"

(Ephes. i. 10), as the head of all principality and power (Col. ii. 10).

The names by which the Message to the Angel of the Church of Laodicea was ushered in were accordingly such as reminded him of the truths that had been thus proclaimed by the great Apostle of the Gentiles: "*These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*" It need hardly be said that this is the solitary passage in which the word, so familiar as a formula of emphasis even in the Greek version of our Lord's teaching, so familiar also in the worship of both Jews and Christians, appears as a personal name claimed by the Lord Jesus as his own. It is obvious that as it came to the inner ear of the Disciple it must have thrown back his mind, full as it was to overflowing of the words of the prophets in their old Hebrew speech, upon the passage in which Isaiah had spoken of the new name of Jehovah as the God of Truth (*Elohim, Amen:* Isa. lxv. 16). But with this there may also have come the recollection of the very syllables in which his beloved Lord had declared Himself to be the Truth, lingering in his memory as that of "Ephphatha" and "Talitha cumi" did in the memory of those from whose reports St. Mark compiled his Gospel, and leading him to see new meanings in the old familiar words. To him it had now come to be equivalent (as in the LXX. Version of the passage in Isaiah) to the name which he elsewhere uses in Gospel and Epistle as the True (ὁ ἀληθινὸς), as standing, not only in conjunctionwith words such as the True

Light, the True Bread, or, as here, the True Witness, but absolutely as in 1 John v. 20. It is not without interest to remember that the language of the Pauline Epistles had already presented an approximation to a like use, and that in Christ the promises of God were Yea, and in Him Amen (2 Cor. i. 20).

To some, at least, however, among his readers that new name was likely to be an obscure and hard saying, and for them, therefore, after his manner elsewhere,[1] he adds the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name: "*the faithful and true witness*," and thus they were led to the first proclamation of that Name, with all that it involved, in the opening words of the Apocalypse (Chap. i. 5). Both the words are thus brought together, we may believe, because the Message that was to follow was one of sharp reproof and condemnation. Men were to remember that Truth had its severer as well as its more gracious aspect, and that He who was the "faithful and true witness" of the everlasting love of the Father would cease to be faithful unless He also testified against the sins of men, against the lukewarmness and indifference which were shutting out that love. And to this there is added the higher and more mysterious title, "*the beginning of the Creation of God*." Here we find another striking instance of that to which I have endeavoured throughout these papers to give its due prominence,—the identity, in its great broad outlines,

[1] As in the case of Siloam (John ix. 7); Gabbatha (xix. 13); Golgotha (xix 17); the Devil and Satan (Rev. xx. 2).

of the teaching of St. John and of St. Paul. For not only does the name express the self-same truth as the "firstborn of every creature" in Col. i. 18, but the very name, the Beginning (ἡ ἀρχὴ), appears as thus applied in Col. i. 18 in connection with "the first-born from the dead;" and we can hardly doubt, from its use here, that it had passed into the liturgical and devotional phraseology of the Asiatic Churches of the valley of the Lycus. The stress laid in the Epistle to the Colossians on the inferiority of those to whom the self-same name of ἀρχαὶ was given in the other sense, of all "principalities and powers" (Col. i. 16, ii. 15), to the One who was the true Beginning, or, if we might venture on an unfamiliar use of a familiar word, the true *Principality* of God's creation, may account for the prominence which the name had gained, and, therefore, for its use here in a Message addressed to a Church exposed, like that of Colossæ, to the risks of angelolatry, of the substitution of lower principalities and created mediators for Him who was the Head over all things to his Church.

In the absence of other information we can only gather the state, outward or inward, of the Church of Laodicea from the words that follow. It is probable from what we know of the city in which the Church was found, that it was exposed, more than most other Churches, to the temptations that come from wealth. The trade of the town, mainly that of dyeing, which it shared with Thyatira and with Sardis, was prosperous; and almost alone of the Asiatic cities it was able, without any subvention

from the Imperial Treasury, to recover from the effects of an earthquake which, in A.D. 60 (according to the view I have taken, but a few years before the date of the Message sent to it), had laid many of its buildings low. We can well believe that not a few of the converts to the faith of Christ belonged to the wealthier class, even as we find at Ephesus that there were those who were "rich in this world" (1 Tim. vi. 17). And the temptation which then, as ever, riches brought with them was to take things easily, to enjoy life and the pleasures which wealth can buy; to act practically on the rule, "*Surtout, point de zéle*," when that zeal brought with it the necessity for self-denial or exertion. The love that had once been warm or glowing was waxing cold, though it had not as yet passed into open apostacy and antagonism. The Angel, or representative leader of the Church, had shared in this general declension, and to him, therefore, the rebuke is primarily addressed: "*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.*" The meaning of the latter word (the Greek of which occurs here only in the New Testament) lies, of course, on the surface. It denotes the temper of *fervent* love, a love that warms and animates the whole life, the temper, we must remember, specially characteristic of the Apostle who records the Message. In him there had been, at first, the fiery zeal that marked him out as one of the Sons of Thunder, and made him seek to call down fire from heaven to consume the village of the Samaritans; and this, though it had been purified, had not lost its old intensity, and

equally in the actual language of the Epistles (2 John 10 11; 3 John 9, 10), and in the tradition of his fleeing from the presence of Cerinthus, we trace the ardent spirit that alike loves strongly and strongly hates. The precise spiritual state described as "cold," is, we may well believe, the exact opposite of this. It is not an equal fervour on the side of falsehood and of evil, not an open hostility to the truth, the fanaticism of the heathen and the heretic. The temper of St. Paul was not "cold" when he led the persecution against Stephen. It is simply the entire absence of any love to Christ and his cause, of even the least enthusiasm for any person and any cause, an absence which, in the former case, may be the result of simple ignorance, or, as in Matt. xxiv. 12, of the presence of an abounding iniquity. The condemnation of that state is expressed in terms which startle us by the naked boldness of the imagery employed: "*I would thou wert cold or hot: so, because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth.*"

That "*tepid*" state of soul (not of cold passing into heat, but of heat passing into cold) was that which had, as its physical effect, in the case *e.g.* of water, to cause nausea, and which, in its moral aspect, was the object of a loathing that was not roused by the state described as "cold." That feeling has, in not a few cases, found its analogues in human utterances. Men prefer an entire stranger to the "candid friend." The profession of a dispassionate attachment to institutions, ecclesiastical or political, is often felt to be but the prelude to desertion or betrayal. The language of the great

poet of mediæval Christendom singles out for sharpest reprobation, those who were,—

"*A Dio spiacenti ed a' nemici suoi.*" [1]

And the reason lies, it is clear, in the tendencies of such a state to self-satisfaction, and, therefore, self-deceit. The man who has no religious feeling at all may be roused to penitence—conscience may be awakened, and the work of conversion may begin. But the "lukewarm" state is for the most part that which is blind to its own shortcoming. It is unreal, and yet thinks that it is in a true and healthy state. As Mr. Carlyle has somewhere put it, in one of those epigrams that haunt one's memory, "it is the hypocrisy which does not know itself to be hypocritical."

[1] It may be worth while to give the whole passage. I quote from an unpublished translation:—

"Speech, many-tongued, and words of dire lament,
Language of sorrow, accents of despair,
Deep voices hoarse, and hands in anguish bent,
These made a discord through the dusky air
Which ever floats eternally the same,
As whirls the sandstorm driven here or there.
And I, upon whose brain strange wanderings came,
Said, 'Master, what is this that now I hear,
And who that race whom torment so doth tame?'
Then he to me: 'This wretched doom they bear,
The sorrow-smitten souls of those whose life
Nor foul reproach nor glorious praise did share,
Mingled they are with those who in the strife
Of angels were nor rebels found nor true,—
Apart withdrawn when wars in Heaven were rife.
Heaven, fearing loss of beauty, spurned that crew,
Nor were they ordered to the depths of Hell,
Lest to the damned some glory should accrue.'
. . . . .
At once I understood and saw full clear,
These were the souls of all the caitiff host
Whom neither God nor yet his foes could bear."

DANTE, "*Inferno.*"

And it needs therefore words of sharp warning and rebuke from Him who searcheth the hearts and reins, or from any who, having the mind of Christ, can speak as He would have spoken of this inner baseness. It may be noted, as tending to confirm the assumption that the Gospel of St. John and the Apocalypse were the work of the same writer, that this is the fault which the former, again and again, notes for special condemnation. Those who could not believe are less the object of his censure than those who, believing, feared to confess the Christ "lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John xii. 42, 43). Something of the same feeling is seen in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as to those who "forsake the assembling of themselves together," who need therefore to be "provoked to love and to good works," lest there should remain for them only "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" (Heb. x. 24, 27).

The underlying grounds of the condemnation, the secret working of this tepidity of the soul, is brought before us in the words that follow: "*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have become wealthy, and I have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou*" (the pronoun is emphatic in the Greek, as is also the article) "*art the wretched and the pitiable one, and poor, and blind, and naked.*" It is clear that the imagined wealth here is that of spiritual, not temporal riches. In regard to the latter, the boast would probably have been true, and would have called for no such stern contrast. And yet it is not

the less true that it was the possession of the riches of this world that made the Laodicean Angel and his Church so satisfied that they had the riches of the other. They took the "unrighteous mammon," not only as a substitute for the "true riches," but almost as a proof that they possessed them. Outward ease and comfort took the place of inward peace; prosperity was thought a sure sign of Divine approval. We cannot read the history of the Church of Christ, or look around us, or retrace our own experience without feeling that it has often been so both with Churches and individual men. Lethargy creeps over them; love is no longer active, material success, multiplied endowments, the power of giving money as the one embodiment of love to God or man: these have been the precursors of decline and of decay. On the larger scale it has been found hard to rouse to energetic spiritual action a Church that was threatened with no dangers, resting on an arm of flesh, secure in the State's support. On the smaller, it is equally hard to convince a respectable and well-to-do Christian that he can be wanting in the true wealth of love when he is ready, on occasion, to draw a cheque for a charitable institution.

The state described was bad, but it was not hopeless. The Great Healer has a word of advice even here, and the advice, though not without a touch of irony, would not have been given in the mere scorn of indignation: "*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and anoint*

thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see." The tone of irony, of which I have just spoken, will be felt, I think, in that advice to "buy," given to one who has just been pronounced a beggar where he fancied himself rich. Where can he find the price for these inestimable treasures? The answer to that question is to be found in the words of Isaiah, which this counsel at once calls to our remembrance, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1). And yet the irony contains in both instances the truest and most gracious tenderness. The wine and the milk, the gold and the white garments, are beyond all price, as measured by earthly standards, and therefore they are *given* freely. And yet, on the other hand, they have, in some sense, their price. The man forsakes his earthly treasure that he may have treasure in heaven. St. Paul counts the things that had been as his "gain," his fancied spiritual riches, as "loss" for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord (Phil. iii. 7, 8). Lastly, besides this renunciation of unreal wealth in both its aspects, there is a price which even the beggar can pay, when he has found that it will be accepted by the Lord who is so ready to sell. He can give *himself*—can yield his body, soul, and spirit, to be dealt with as his Lord shall see fit, if only he may receive the priceless treasure which he needs. To accept that discipline is the counsel now given, and it is implied that it will not be without a sharp severity. The "gold" which Christ will thus "sell" to him who seeks it, the treasure of

holiness and peace and joy, is that which has been "*tried in the fire;*" and this, as in all like cases, implies chastisement and suffering. The "white garments" that hide the shame of nakedness, the true holiness of life which alone prevents the exposure of that "inner vileness" of which even the saints of God are ever painfully conscious, are those which have been made white in that blood of Christ which symbolizes suffering. The eye-salve, which gives clearness of vision, does so (one may refer, if such a reference be needed, to the history of Tobit's recovery from his blindness, Tob. x. 8–12) not without the pricking smart that clears away the blinding or beclouding humours.

Of the three forms of discipline thus indicated, the first scarcely needs any discussion here. The second has been dealt with in speaking of the Message to the Church of Sardis. The third is new, and stands almost, if not altogether, alone in the imagery of Scripture, and calls therefore for a few brief notes. I know not whether the suggestion which I am about to make has been made by any other interpreter, but most readers will, I think, answer in the affirmative if asked whether they remember anything in St. John's Gospel of which these words remind them. They will recollect how, in one instance at least, our Lord gave sight to the blind, not by word or touch only, but by the use of an eye-salve, or *collyrium*, how "he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and *anointed* the eyes of the blind man with the clay" (John ix. 6), and they will not think it strange to assume that these words must have recalled to the mind

of the Seer what he had thus himself witnessed in one, if not in many instances (Mark viii. 23). The very state of the Laodicean Church had indeed been described in words recorded in connection with that very narrative: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John ix. 41). As in those cases, sight came through that which derived its power to heal from the lips of Christ, so here that which would remove the spiritual blindness was the power of that Divine Word which would make the man's inward eye see himself as God sees him, and with the smart of that knowledge draw forth tears of penitence which, as they flowed, would cleanse.

The end of the Message stands out in striking contrast with the beginning. No other opens with such sharp unsparing severity; no other closes with such yearning tenderness and a promise so exceeding glorious. Something there was, we know, in the character of the beloved Disciple, as seen in his Epistles and the traditions connected with his name, which corresponded to that combination of qualities that seemed at first hardly compatible. But that something was but the reflection of the union of the two in the Lord and Master, into whose likeness he had grown. Where the highest love is, there must also be severity, and the severity is a proof of love, yearning, pitying, and seeking to restore. And so, after piercing as with the sharp two-edged sword to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, He, the Lord of the Churches, in the gracious words that follow, pours in the oil and the wine that are to cleanse and heal: "*As many as I*

love I rebuke" (*i.e.*, rebuke so as to convict),[1] "*and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent.*" There is in the Original a force which it is not easy to reproduce in a translation. The '*I*' stands first, and has the special emphasis which always attaches to the presence of the Greek pronoun. It is as though he suggested a contrast between himself and others. "Human friends may seek simply to please and soothe, to speak smooth things and prophesy deceits; but not so with Me. I give a far other proof of love, and so deal with those who are dear to Me as to make them conscious of the evil that mars their peace and keeps them from their true blessedness; and when that consciousness has been roused, I bring them under the loving, though it may be sharp, discipline of chastisement." The command, "Be zealous, therefore, and repent," may seem at first to invert the natural order of the soul's recovery. Must not "repentance," the turning from evil, precede the righteous zeal which is to animate the true life? In some cases, perhaps in most, that is, doubtless, the natural order. But the inward life of the soul, in all its subtle workings, cannot always be brought under these sharply-defined formulæ; and here we can, I think, recognize a special adaptation to the exigences of the case with which the great Healer was dealing. The root-evil of the Laodicean Church and its representative was their lukewarm indifference, the absence of any zeal, of any earnestness. And the first step, therefore, to higher things was to pass into a state in which those elements of

[1] The word is the same as that which describes the office of the Comforter (John xvi. 8).

life should no longer be conspicuous by their absence. "Be zealous;" let that be (so the tense of the Greek verb indicates) the "true and abiding state;" and then (the tense changing to that which indicates a thing done once for all), let the first act of that new state be to throw itself with all its force on the side of God, to repent of the evil of the past, and to enter on a new course of action for the future."

And then we come to that which Christian art and poetry have alike made familiar to us,—the promise that speaks of the love which rebukes and chastens, the love of the Divine Friend in all its infinite tenderness: "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me.*"

The words of the promise that thus come as the sequel to the rebuke are referred by most Commentators to the imagery of the Song of Solomon, and are claimed accordingly as sanctioning the mystical interpretation of that Book. There the bride tells her tale of expectancy and joy, "I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled" (Song Sol. v. 2); and the frequent recurrence of that image in the visions of the Apocalypse,—the "marriage supper of the Lamb;" the "New Jerusalem coming down as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. xxi. 2), the "bride, the Lamb's wife" (xxi. 9),—seems at first to give a high degree of plausibility to the view that it is to be found here. I am constrained, however, by what seems to me a true method of interpretation,

to reject that view and to seek for another meaning. It cannot be too strongly impressed on our minds that wherever that image of the Bride and the Bridegroom occurs, either in the Old or the New Testament, it shadows forth the relation of Jehovah to his people as a collective unity, of Christ to his Church. The wider the induction the more convincing will be the proof that, however largely the other idea may have prevailed in the writings of Christian or other Mystics, this, and not the relation of the individual soul to its Maker or Redeemer, is throughout Scripture the truth shadowed forth in all bridal and nuptial parables. But here the promise is distinctly personal, and describes, under whatever figure, what belongs to that living individual experience of a joy with which a stranger doth not intermeddle. There is no picture here of the bride tarrying for her spouse. That which is brought so vividly before us is the arrival of a guest at night, of a guest who comes to cheer and guide and comfort. And if so, is it altogether an idle dream to imagine that St. John may have had other sources of imagery open to him than those which he found in books, however sacred; that the memory of his own early years may have been brought back to him by the words that he now heard, as supplying the fullest expression of his Lord's communion with the loving and trusting soul? Remember how his discipleship had begun by his tarrying where the Divine Friend was for the time dwelling, invited by the words, "Come and see," and there listening during the long hours, till day passed on into evening, and evening into night (John i. 39). Remember

how, in all likelihood, he was sharing in the same high blessedness in the lodging at Jerusalem, when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, and so was able to record that marvellous teaching as to the new birth which he alone reports, and reports with such a vivid fulness as to make it hardly possible to doubt that he himself had heard it (John iii. 2–13). Think of the three years of companionship growing into ever closer and closer friendship, so that he became known to all men as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," of the long-continued intimacy implied in the words which led that disciple to take to his own house the sorrowing mother of his Lord, and then ask whether such a scene as that which this verse brings before us may not often have presented itself in his own actual experience? Think of the day's work over, the sick healed and the poor taught, and then the Master, after his manner, leaves the shouts of the crowd and the stir of the town, and withdraws into some solitary place to hold communion with his Father; and the scholar remains in his lonely chamber in the cottage at Bethsaida, or the lodging at Capernaum, watching, not sleeping, waiting for the return of Him in whose presence he found life, postponing till then the simple meal with which the day habitually closed. And then, as he watches, there is the distant sound of footfall, and then He, the expected Friend, stands at the door and knocks, and then the voice, so familiar in its gentle sweetness, though capable also of the tones of stern rebuke, tells him who it is, and then he rises, and the door is opened, and the Friend enters —the Son of Man, who had not where to lay his head,

finds shelter under his disciple's roof: He comes, first, as a guest, and sits down to sup with the scholar, who thus, as a host, receives Him; but soon the places are changed, and He takes, as it were, the place that of right belongs to Him. He blesses and breaks the bread and gives thanks over the cup of wine. He is now guest no longer, but the host. The disciple "sups with him."

That I take to be the outward framework of the parable of this verse, at once probable in itself and a more adequate representation of the spiritual truths shadowed forth than any bridal imagery. What men want is the consciousness of the presence of a friend that "sticketh closer than a brother." It is better (the very devotional utterances which express the opposite feeling being themselves the strongest proof of it) even for women, in their individual personality, to think of Christ as the friend and the brother, rather than as the bridegroom of their souls. And now the promise that this blessedness shall belong to any one who will but claim it — even to one who had been "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" — is given in all its fulness. There is something, we cannot doubt, in the inner life of every one who is zealous and repents which answers to the several stages of that experience which was thus brought home to St. John's memory — Christ "stands at the door and knocks." Warnings come that either rouse us from our slumbers, or fall on the expectant ear and make us feel that the Judge who rebukes and chastens is not far off. Suffering in one or other of its many forms, unexpected judgments, or unlooked-

for mercies, these tell us that He is asking for admission. If we listen in the attitude of reverence and faith we "hear the voice," become more distinctly conscious of that Presence, not as the Judge only, but as the Friend who comes to plead with us and for us, and so to be our Advocate and Comforter. Well for us if then we open the door of our hearts to Him, even though it may have been long barred against Him, and the weeds that creep over it may shew Him how little we have been prepared to give Him entrance. For then it shall be true of us also, that while we receive Him, He, on his side, is receiving us. If we invite Him to share what we have to offer Him of that which has been indeed his own gift to us, He, in his turn, will call us to his own heavenly feast, and so even the poor chamber of our hearts will become thus honoured and glorified by his presence, as one of the "many mansions" in "the house of his Father."

These thoughts serve at least to prepare the way for the glorious words with which the Message to Laodicea closes: "*He that overcometh, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne.*" It is, as I have said, the highest and most glorious of all the promises with which the Seven Messages end. It speaks of nothing less, if we may use a familiar word in a new sense, than the *apotheosis* of the conqueror. So, when on earth, the prayer of Jesus for his disciples had been for nothing less than this, "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;" and He had said of them, "The glory which thou gavest me I have

given them," and therefore He could pray, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" (John xvii. 21–24). The conquerors in the strife with evil share "the throne of God and of the Lamb," the throne which is the great centre of all the visions of the wider future that from this point begin to unfold themselves to the prophet's gaze (Rev. iv. 2; xxii. 1, and *passim*). They are, in some sense which we cannot as yet fathom, made "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4), sharers in the holiness, the wisdom, and the love, and therefore in the glory and the majesty which have been from everlasting.

And so the Messages to the Seven Churches close. I have not attempted in dealing with them to dwell at any length on the history of these Asiatic cities in the past, or on their present state, in some instances of decay and desolation, in others of an outward prosperity, under the yoke of their Mahometan conquerors. Whatever interest may attach to such descriptions they contribute little or nothing, I believe, to a true interpretation. Still more entirely have I thought it right to exclude altogether what has been called the "prophetic" interpretation, which sees in the Seven Churches, as in the seven trumpets and the seven seals, the symbolism of an historical sequence, and connects each with some one period, more or less clearly marked, in the history of the Universal Church, beginning with the Apostolic age and ending with that which followed on the Reformation. I entirely agree with Archbishop Trench in looking on such a method of interpretation as grasping at the shadow and losing the

substance, as leading to fantastic and arbitrary applications of Divine words, and robbing them, in so doing, of all their interest and life. But it remains true, as I trust these notes have not failed to shew, that however directly historical and personal in the first instance, they have, for that very reason, a wider range. Any Church, at any time, may look into these pictures of spiritual excellence or decay, as into a mirror, and see in one or other of them its own likeness. The soul of each individual disciple may learn to behold in them his own besetting temptations, the rebuke or the encouragement which he himself most needs, the rewards to which even he may rightly and reverently aspire.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

THE VINDICTIVE PSALMS VINDICATED.

PART IV.

In two preceding papers upon this subject[1] I have addressed myself, almost exclusively, to the proof of this one proposition, that prayers for the temporal and even capital punishment of the wicked, while unlawful and unjustifiable on the lips of Christian men, were nevertheless, under certain conditions, perfectly lawful and perfectly natural on the part of those to whom life and immortality and a judgment *to come* had not been brought to light. I have endeavoured to prove such prayers to be a necessary and commendable result of the partial revelation vouchsafed to the Jewish people; of the purely temporal eco-

[1] See The Expositor vol. iii. pp. 101–118, 185–203.

nomy under which they lived. And I am not without hopes that, to some of my readers at least, this point may now seem to be sufficiently established, and to need no further witness.

And yet, up to the present moment, the crowning argument in its favour, the argument which, as it seems to me, settles this question conclusively and for ever, has barely been hinted at. For indeed the lawfulness and perfect propriety of the prayers in question may be proved in a very summary and decisive way. It is proved by the fact that such prayers are recorded in Holy Scripture, and recorded as receiving the solemn and express ratification and approval of God.

It is, I think, a consideration which is constantly overlooked in the discussion of the Vindictive Psalms that we have both imprecations and comminations outside the Psalter, imprecations and comminations similar in kind to those of the Psalter and certainly not less terrible in degree, and yet that these imprecations and these comminations have received, distinctly and unmistakably, the seal of the Divine approval. It follows, consequently, that for those who admit the inspiration of Scripture, these latter afford a complete and triumphant justification of the former, for obviously, no one who admits that the latter are right can logically maintain that the former are wrong.

It remains for us, therefore, in the present paper, to consider some of the prayers for vengeance which are found elsewhere in the Old Testament. It will, perhaps, be sufficient for our purpose if we notice two of these, the two which are the most characteristic

of their class, viz., the imprecation of Elijah on the soldiers of Ahaziah (2 Kings i. 10–12), and the curse of Elisha on the children of Bethel (2 Kings ii. 24). And I cite these, not merely because they strengthen my position and make (as it appears to me) assurance doubly sure, but also because of the direct and important bearing which they have on another branch of the argument—which, indeed, is the next link in the chain—the argument that the Psalmists, in their comminations and imprecations alike, only denounce and desire the *equitable and proportionate* punishment of the wicked. It is obvious, of course, that this point can only be conclusively established by a detailed examination of the vindictive passages, but it must also be obvious that such examination can lead to no certain and reliable results, unless we first secure a correct standard by which totry these passages ; unless, that is to say, we first know what were, and what were not, under the Jewish economy, the fitting and adequate retributions of sin. And this question, the prayers for temporal punishment found outside the Psalter (taken in connection with the judgments which followed them) will, in some degree, assist us to determine.

Now, in considering these two confessedly perplexing passages, the first point to be remarked is that they present us with real imprecations ; that is to say, they each contain a prayer addressed to God for some vengeance, some judgment, on the prophets' enemies. As to the latter—the curse of Elisha—there can be no manner of doubt. That the prophet prayed for the precise judgment which befell these children,—death by wild beasts,—we are not per-

haps warranted to conclude, but that he invoked the vengeance of God to punish their insolence is certain, and that he devoted them to some sort of *destruction* hardly admits of question. Every curse is ultimately, and whether so expressed or not, an appeal to a Higher Power, and in this case it *was* so expressed, for he cursed them "in the name of the Lord." But it is not quite so clear and obvious that the words of Elijah were imprecatory, the words which our Translators have rendered "*Let* fire come down from heaven." The LXX. translates the verb as a future, "Fire *shall* come down" (*καταβήσεται*). And it must be admitted that the original word (תֵּרֵד), though a shortened form, has not necessarily, in the opinion of grammarians, a jussive force. Indeed, the self-same word occurs immediately afterwards (with Vau conversive) as a past—"there *came down* fire," &c. At the same time the following considerations go far to prove that it should here be rendered (as in the Authorized Version) as an imperative :—

(1) The Versions favour this translation. The Vulgate, *e.g.*, and Jerome both have "*descendat ignis.*" (2) Josephus represents Elijah as *praying* for the destruction of the companies. (3) The disciples of our Lord, John and James, evidently believed that Elias *commanded* fire to come down from heaven (Luke ix. 54). (4) The words of Elijah are apparently an echo, a verbal *retaliation*, of the words addressed to him. The captain, or the spokesman, of the party had said, "*Man of God, . . . come down.*" The Prophet, taking the words out of his lips, replies, "If a '*man of God*' [am] I, '*come down*' fire," &c.

(literal translation). The former cried, "The king hath *said*, 'Come down.'" Elijah, contrasting his own mandate with the king's, "answered and *said*, . . . Come down fire," &c. With an imperative the echo is perfect, while a future considerably impairs the parallel. (5) The position of the verb (תָּרֵד אֵשׁ) favours, if indeed it does not necessitate, an imperative rendering. To this may be added—and this with most readers will be sufficient by itself—that "the translation of the Authorized Version is preferred by the best Hebraists."[1] We may safely assume, therefore, that these words are a strict and proper imprecation.

And, this point being established, let us consider in the second place that the judgments for which the two prophets prayed, equal, if, indeed, they do not far exceed, in point of severity anything recorded in the Book of Psalms. We may possibly find expressions which to some may seem to run almost parallel with these (*e.g.*, Psa. lix. 13; Psa. cxxxvii. 9), but we shall look in vain for anything which goes beyond them. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive what could go beyond them. We can hardly imagine a more terrible petition than that whole "companies" may die an instant death by fire, or that little children may be torn to pieces by wild beasts.

But that these expressions equal in their seeming vindictiveness anything found in the Psalter will be clear if we consider who were respectively the victims of these awful judgments and what they had done to provoke them. In the latter case they were children,

[1] "The Speaker's Commentary," vol. iii. p. 2.

"*little* children,"[1] whose only crime was that they "mocked" a prophet of the Lord. In the former they were comparatively innocent men; men, that is to say, who, whatever their other sins may have been, were at the time this judgment befell them merely executing a behest of their king—a behest which it would have been almost certain death to them to have disputed. It is true that "every soldier's duty is the king's, *but* every soldier's conscience is his own," and it may be thought that the companies detailed to this service—required, as it would seem, to lay sacrilegious hands upon the Lord's prophet, to bring him by force, if need be—ought to have repudiated the impious commission whatever the risk. But against this it may fairly be urged that "the first duty of a soldier is obedience," and that in this particular case, so far as appears from the sacred narrative, there was nothing to make disobedience a positive duty. These soldiers were simply despatched by their sovereign lord to bid the man of God come down, and, therefore, it was not theirs to make reply or curiously to inquire what might be the issues of their mission.

[1] It has been contended by some writers (*e.g.*, Kitto, in his "Bible Illustrations") that these mockers were young men. But the epithet "little" is decisive against this view. If it be urged that "Solomon calls himself a 'little child' when he was certainly a young man," the answer is that this was obviously the language of hyperbole and self-depreciation. Nor is there much force in Kitto's remark that "although those who came out against the Prophet are called 'little children,' the 'little' is dropped where the forty-two who are slain are mentioned," for it would have been a somewhat unusual repetition, had it been inserted. There *may* be some significance in the fact that "even the word for children (נְעָרִים) is then changed to another" (יְלָדִים), but it is too slender a foundation to build upon.

Nor can it be said that there was anything in their demeanour and address which called for this terrible chastisement. Their demeanour — and especially would this be the case with the second company — was most respectful. They recognize the office and work of Elijah; they address him as a "man of God;" they simply recite their message, "Thus hath the king said, Come down quickly!" The men themselves, therefore, we are justified in saying, were not flagitious sinners. The conduct which cost them their lives does not strike us, any more than does that of the children of Bethel, as being in any high degree criminal.

And yet, such as they were, both soldiers and children, and such as their crimes were, if crimes they can be called, the prophets prayed in both cases for their destruction; they imprecated upon them a capital punishment at the hand of God. It is not too much to say therefore, especially when we consider the sort of men against whom the imprecations of the Psalms were directed,—Doeg, Ahithophel, Alcimus, "tyrants," "workers of iniquity," "bloody men,"—that the Psalter contains no imprecations which, for their seeming vindictiveness and ferocity, are at all comparable to these.

But we have now to remark that these two imprecations, fierce and truculent as at first sight they seem to us to be, have nevertheless received the express sanction and approval of Heaven. In the most emphatic way God has countersigned them. There are those who maintain that God must also have *inspired* them, and there is much to be said in favour of this view, especially in the case of Elijah.

It seems hardly probable that either prophet would have presumed, on his own authority, without a Divine prompting, to fulminate such curses as these. And the prophet last mentioned would appear to have been under Divine guidance throughout the whole of the transaction. It was "the angel of the Lord" (verse 3) that sent him to meet the first messengers of Ahaziah. It was "the angel of the Lord" that subsequently sent him with the fourth party of messengers to Ahaziah himself (verse 15). Is it at all an improbable conclusion that the same angel inspired him to call down fire from heaven upon the two bands of messengers that were destroyed? And if so, then Almighty God was not merely the executor, but also the author of these imprecations. We are not concerned to prove, however, that these prayers were inspired: it is enough for us to know that they were approved and accepted. And this we do know. Upon this point there is no room for doubt. The fires of heaven, the she-bears out of the wood, were respectively the response of the Supreme Arbiter of life and death to the prayers of Elijah and Elisha. God has justified these prayers by answering them, and justified them, as we are bound to believe, because they were just. The fulfilment they received proves their lawfulness and propriety. We may not suppose that the most merciful God would accomplish such a holocaust of human beings—over one hundred men, made in the image of God and all of them dear to God and precious in his sight—merely to gratify the pique or the pride even of the greatest of the prophets. And the forty and two children, the

very hairs of their heads were all numbered by the Eternal Father, and if He sent fierce she-bears to devour them, to tear their flesh and steep their hairs in blood, it must have been because it was just and right that it should be so. "The curse causeless," we know, "shall not come" (Prov. xxvi. 2). But this curse *did* come, therefore it cannot have been causeless. We are forced to the conclusion, accordingly, that *these* prayers for capital punishments, at any rate, must have been both lawful and commendable. And if these were lawful, who shall presume to say that similar, but much milder, much less terrible, prayers in the Psalms were unlawful?

But this is not all. We are not left to *infer* the justice and fitness of these prayers from the fact that the All-Wise and All-Holy has answered them, but it so happens that we can understand for ourselves their necessity and propriety. Let us take the prayer of Elijah first. It is not difficult to see, surely, that the glory of God and the good of humanity may have been subserved by those devouring flames. The "swift destruction" by the act of God of over one hundred men—one hundred innocent men, if you please,—may have been absolutely necessary, in those impious days, as a signal manifestation of God's hatred of idolatry and of his determination to crush it. It may well be that nothing less appalling would rouse a nation which had witnessed unmoved, or at any rate unconverted, the flames of Carmel. Once before at Elijah's bidding the fires of God had descended and "consumed the bullock, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust,

and licked up the water that was in the trench" (1 Kings xviii. 38). But the idolatrous people that saw the portent, nevertheless persevered in idolatry. The licentious and brutalizing cultus of Baal and Ashtaroth was now more openly followed than even in the preceding reign. Ahab had, it is true, favoured the gods and the prophets of his foreign wife, but he had also consulted the professed prophets of the Lord. It was reserved for his son altogether to ignore the religion of his race and country and to send across the border to the oracle of the Philistines, just as if there were no God and no prophet in the covenanted land. The cause of true religion, consequently, was now in greater jeopardy than ever. If the whole country was not to follow the example of the Court, and cast off all allegiance to the God of Abraham, there must be a second sign from heaven, but of a sterner character. The last great portent had utterly failed. But what if it now took the form of a chastisement? What if it consumed idolaters, instead of wood and stones and dust? Surely, men would then learn that there *was* a God in Israel, a God stronger and more terrible than the foul idol of Ekron. This holocaust, then, may have been needed, and probably nothing less awful would have availed the least, to stem the perilous tide of idolatry. Men, we repeat, who had witnessed with their own eyes, as "all Israel" had, the miracle of Mount Carmel,—in the opinion of the later Jews the grandest of all the displays of Divine power,—and had thought, no long time afterwards, to silence, perhaps to slay, the Prophet whose mission had received this

signal attestation, were not likely to be much impressed by anything less fearful. One good reason then, at least, can be discovered why Elijah was permitted, perhaps was inspired, to pray for the destruction of men's lives. And as to the victims of this visitation, it may be quite true that these detachments were composed of comparatively innocent men. But what of that? They were, at any rate, commissioned to seize the prophet of Jehovah and in so far they were the representatives of the national apostacy and the open enemies of the God of Israel. Were their lives to be considered in comparison with the cause of morality and religion? For aught we know, their death may have conduced in a high degree to the best interests of the nation and of the world. It may have been expedient that these should die "that the whole nation" should "perish not" (St. John xi. 50). They may have suffered, as we know one did in after times, not because they had sinned, but "that the works of God should be made manifest in" them (St. John ix. 3). Besides, it is to be remembered that Ahaziah, in sending so large a force — fifty men — to apprehend Elijah, had practically defied the power of God and challenged Him to a trial of strength. "Who is that God," he had virtually said, "that shall deliver you out of my hand?" And that he sent a second company, and even a third, after the utter destruction which had overtaken his former messengers, shews in a very striking way the extent and daring of his impiety. Here was a man, the anointed of God, who would wage war with God *à outrance*. There was

no help for it, consequently, but for God to shew forth his power. He *must* take up the challenge and vindicate his claim to allegiance or stand dishonoured in the eyes of his own subjects. And we see in this fact a second reason for Elijah's prayer. We see that that prayer was forced upon him by the exigences of the situation; and that, terrible as it was, it was for the good of the many and for the glory of God.

And the curse of Elisha is capable, unless I am much mistaken, of an equally complete vindication. True, it has a peculiarly spiteful appearance. To the casual observer it seems as if the Prophet, irritated by the gibes of a troop of rude and thoughtless children, had straightway devoted them all to instant death. Indeed, with such difficulties has the narrative seemed to be beset that some writers of eminence [1] have been constrained to defend it on the ground that probably the sacred text, in its present state, does not preserve the whole of the circumstances; in other words that there must have been something which is not recorded, or which, if recorded, has now lost its original signification, to account for such a curse and such a punishment. I shall hope to shew, however, that there is no need to have recourse to any such supposition; that even if there was a "disproportion between the punishment and the offence," still the curse was appropriate and the vengeance necessary and just and salutary.

And to prove this, it will only be requisite, I imagine, after what has already been advanced, to

[1] Mr. Grove, *e.g.*, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible.

take into consideration the place, the time, and the circumstances of the transaction. As to the first: it was on the town of Bethel that this vengeance fell. Now, Bethel, it is true, had its school of the prophets, and amongst its inhabitants, no doubt, were some of the seven thousand who had not bowed their knees unto Baal; but, still, the place as a whole, there can be little question, was given to idolatry. For there, for a long time past, the worship of the calf had been established, and it would therefore presumably be a stronghold of the superstitions with which the prophets were commissioned to do battle.[1] It is reasonable to suppose, accordingly, that the Lord's prophets would be regarded there with the greatest hostility. During the lifetime of Elijah this had not dared to shew itself. The powers with which he was invested were too much dreaded to permit any open display of hatred or opposition. But now that he is taken out of the way, and there is no further fear of his avenging arm, it breaks out in the presence of his obscure and untried successor. The place is so completely hostile to the ancient faith that the children, less discreet than their parents, display openly the hatred with which they have been imbued at home. The gibes which *they* fling at Elisha are but the reflection of their parents' unexpressed but bitter animosity. It is not to be supposed for a moment that the opprobrious words they uttered were the outcomes of mere rudeness; they were a deliberate insult and defiance of the

[1] The *paronomasia* found in Hosea iv. 15; v. 8; x. 5, where Beth-El "house of God," is designated Beth-Aven, "house of nothing," is no slight indication of the character and cultus of the place.

new prophet of the Lord.[1] The same words might possibly have had but little significance elsewhere: they were only too significant at Bethel.

But let us consider, in the next place, *when* it was that these children's taunts, the natural product of their parents' teaching, were uttered. It was after the fiery sign which had been given them on Mount Carmel. It was also after the terrible fires of God had consumed over one hundred men at a stroke. So that both portent and punishment alike had failed of the desired effect. Despite the severe lesson they had learned, the heart of the people of Bethel was not turned back again; it was still rebellious and revolting. And now of late another sign from heaven had been granted them. The Bethelites can hardly have been ignorant of the assumption of Elijah. The sons of the prophets who were in their midst had foretold it. And the news could not but have reached them from Jericho that the great Prophet's body was missing, and, after diligent search, could nowhere be found. But a few days before he had been amongst them, in company with Elisha. They hear meanwhile that he has been taken up to

[1] The ingenious suggestion of Abarbanel (adopted by some modern writers), that the words "Go up, go up" (עֲלֵה), contained an impious reference to the recent ascension of Elijah, - bidding Elisha, in fact, to take himself off after his master, – is effectually negatived, as I venture to think, by the occurrence of the same word *twice* just before. "And he *went up* (וַיַּעַל) from thence, . . . and as he was *going up*" (עֹלֶה), &c. These words, standing where they do, make it almost certain that the "go up" refers to Elisha's "going up," and not Elijah's. It is much more credible, however, that the term "bald-head" (קָרֵחַ) was employed to insinuate how unlike he was to Elijah (whose long shaggy hair seems to have been his most marked feature, 2 Kings i. 8, *Heb.*), and how unfit to be his successor.

the skies in a chariot of fire. To confirm the report, Elisha re-appears at their gates—and alone. It is at this moment, as if to testify their disregard for the dispensations of God and their determination not to recognize another prophet, that the children, revealing the thoughts of their parents' hearts, go forth, possibly are sent forth, to mock him to his face.

But in order to form a correct estimate of these events we must remember, not only the precise juncture at which they happened, but also the age, the period of Israel's history. It was emphatically a crisis. The nation was still halting between two opinions. The question whether Jehovah should be recognized and worshipped as the God of the Jews, or Baal, was still trembling in the balance—and with it the hope for the future of the world. The vigorous ministry of Elijah had no doubt decided many, but it had by no means broken the power of the false gods and of their immoral and degrading worship. Truth, religion, probity, purity, all were at stake. Should the hand on the dial of civilization and humanity be put back ten degrees, or forward?—this was the question. For the bold Prophet, whose voice alone had witnessed openly for the truth, was now among them no more. The great bulwark against the inroads of the Phœnician superstition was removed. Would the nation, now that they had, or thought they had, the fires of God to fear no longer, throw itself into the arms of Baal? Would the elect people, following the example of its rulers, deny and dishonour the God of their fathers? These were the questions awaiting a settlement on the day that Elisha appeared at the gates of Bethel.

And now let us consider the capacity in which he appeared amongst its inhabitants. He had been appointed prophet; he had inherited the mantle and the mission of Elijah. To him it was given to carry on the single-handed warfare against falsehood and impurity which his great master had waged. But as yet the people understood it not. He was not recognized as a prophet of the Lord. The nation did not know, what the schools of the prophets knew, that the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha. He must have credentials to shew them. The mockery with he was greeted shews how much he needed them. Gainsayers must be taught, and taught in an unmistakable way, that he had been anointed to be Elijah's successor. It was for this reason no doubt, among others, and not because of any petty irritation at the jeers of little children, that, when he found his authority questioned and defied, he called down upon the Bethelites — for the curse fell upon the parents as much as upon the children — the just judgment of God. It was that all Israel might know that Jehovah had not left himself without witness, and that the son of Shaphat was established to be his Prophet.

And what if the establishment of his authority, together with the rebuke of idolatry and the testimony to the sovereignty of God which were effected at the same moment, involved the loss of human life? What if it cut off two and forty children and brought mourning into many a home? Were these things to be considered for an instant when the very existence of the one true religion was at stake? The penalty may seem heavy as compared with the

offence, but it must be remembered that, even if it were so, it was all the more calculated to effect the object contemplated. The nation would thenceforth know that there was a prophet among them, and one not to be trifled with or despised. The very severity of the chastisement may therefore have been one element in its fitness; it may have served to stamp it as a public example,—to make it a warning for all time. It may have been what it was in order to teach all those who should come after the guilt of despising the messengers of the Most High.[1]

We find, then, that the apparent disproportion between the punishment and the offence, which has been such a stumbling-block to the reader and the expositor, is at once explained if we remember that the sentence of death was pronounced against these little children not because of their own sin alone, nor yet because of their parents' sins (though it is easy to see that this is a case in which the sins of the parents *were* visited upon the children), but because of the flagrant impiety, the persistent idolatry, the determined rejection of Jehovah and his servants the prophets, of which the nation at large was guilty, and of which these children's jeers and insults were the latest and most significant expression: and hence we conclude that this summary act of vengeance, hardly as it may have borne on a few,

[1] We possess, unless I am greatly mistaken, a clue to the interpretation of the curses, both of Elijah and Elisha, and a complete justification of each, in the terrible commination of the Son of Man (Matt. x. 14, 15), "Whosoever shall not *receive you*, *nor hear your words*, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city." Yet Sodom and Gomorrha were destroyed by *fire from heaven*.

may have been for the general good; it may have contributed—who knows how largely?—to the progress of the world, to the advancement of truth and purity and religion.

And now let us compare these two imprecations—imprecations, be it remembered, which God has justified, and imprecations the justice of which it is permitted us to see for ourselves—with those of the Psalms. Wherein do the latter differ from the former? Are these seemingly cruel and vindictive? So are these, but in a much higher degree. Do those pray for the temporal punishment of the *wicked?* So do these, and more; they pray for the destruction of those whom we should hardly designate by that name. Do those ever *seem* to desire an excessive punishment,—one altogether disproportionate to the offence? The latter *do* this beyond question; they desire, *i.e.*, a punishment which, relatively to the offence which provoked it, is excessive, though not excessive relatively to the object aimed at. In what, then, it may be asked, do they differ? They differ, as it seems to me, only in the following respects. First, it is on record that God has approved and fulfilled the former, whilst we have no such record that He has either approved or fulfilled the latter, though of course He *may* have done so. Secondly, in the case of the former, we know the circumstances under which they were uttered, and can therefore judge for ourselves of their propriety or otherwise, while, in the case of the latter, we do not know, and are therefore deprived of this means of vindicating them. Thirdly, if, in the case of the former, the imprecations only had been recorded; if Holy Scripture,

that is to say, had been silent as to their ratification by God, and had supplied us with no data for proving their fitness, then there are no imprecations in the Psalter which would have presented us with anything like the same difficulty; none which would have worn the same appearance of malignity and cruelty; none which would have been so universally reprobated or so emphatically condemned.

But it may, perhaps, be urged here that the imprecations of the two Prophets were directly and immediately inspired, and that therefore they have a sanction and justification which those of the Psalmists have not. But the answer to this is, first, that we have stronger reasons for believing in the inspiration of the latter than of the former; for, while it is merely a conjecture, though a probable one, that the curses of Elijah and Elisha were suggested to their minds by God, an inspiration is distinctly claimed for some of the imprecations of the Psalmists;[1] and, secondly, that if the former *were* inspired, then we need have no misgivings in holding the inspiration of the latter, which are seemingly so much less vindictive. Or, it may be alleged that, after all, there is a malevolent tone about the denunciations of the Psalms which we are not conscious of when we read those of the Prophets. But it must be remembered that the former are often given in detail,—and it is sometimes in the detail that the vindictiveness seems to lie,—and, furthermore, that they stand out the more prominently and, so to speak, catch the eye because they are unrelieved by any precise statement of the circum-

[1] See THE EXPOSITOR vol. iii. p. 46.

stances which provoked them. Nor is it to be forgotten that men who are crying to God for a vengeance which they cannot be sure that He will take, or will only take in answer to fervent prayer, will naturally manifest a warmth and an importunity very different from the calm confidence of those who know, as the Prophets must surely have done, that their petitions will have an instant fulfilment.

The conclusion to which we are inevitably conducted by this examination of the imprecations of Elijah and Elisha, and the comparison which we have instituted between them and those of the Psalmists, is obvious. Indeed, the whole review reduces itself to two inexorable syllogisms, which may be stated in the following shape:—

1. Prayers for the temporal punishment of the wicked are found in Scripture, proceeding both from Psalmists and from Prophets, and whatever difficulties attach to the former class, attach in a far higher degree to the latter. But God has justified the latter. *A fortiori*, it is not for us to condemn the former.

2. Prayers for punishments which seem to us excessive and disproportionate are found both in the Psalter and in the Historical Books, and the disproportion is much greater in the latter than in the former. But a knowledge of the facts of the case (which the Historical Books supply) enables us to justify the latter as strictly fair and equitable It is not for us, therefore, in the ignorance of facts (in which the Poetical Books, as a rule, leave us) to deny that the former may have been, and probably were, fair and equitable also.

JOSEPH HAMMOND.

VAN-LENNEP ON BIBLE LANDS.[1]

Dr. Van-Lennep's long residence in the East, and his familiar intercourse with the men of many Oriental races and classes, give a singular value to his descriptions of the physical and moral conditions of human life in the lands which the Bible has made sacred to us. And as, in "the unchanging East," moreover, the "customs and manners," which are very largely the result of the climate and the physical conditions and resources of its inhabitants, have an unusual vitality, and have for the most part been handed down by an unbroken tradition from the earliest times, to acquaint ourselves with them in their modern forms is really to acquire a clue to the meaning of many parts and passages of Holy Writ.

Dr. Van-Lennep has used his unusual opportunities with no mean skill, both in describing the customs which have their origin in the physical features of the East, and those whose origin must be traced in the history of the most ancient times. No man can read these two volumes carefully without getting wrought into his mind the very background set in which the leading historical incidents of Scripture shew to most advantage. Every minister and teacher of the Word will do well to read them, and to read them again.

But I can hardly advise those who give themselves to the study and exposition of the several

[1] "Bible Lands: their Modern Customs and Manners. Illustrative of Scripture. By Henry J. Van-Lennep, D.D. London: John Murray.

Books of the Bible habitually to consult this work. It is valuable rather for its general effect on the mind than for any light it throws on this passage of Scripture or that. Indeed, as I have read it, I have a little wondered that so good a scholar, and so diligent a student of Holy Writ should have cared to load his foot-notes with references to Scripture which his text does little to illustrate. The remark of an Arab that with a fleet and intelligent horse "caravans are arrested and brought to your tent," hardly throws light enough on Job i. 17 to warrant a reference to it. Nor have I found Job i. 19 grow much the clearer for being told that "the camel instinctively knows the approach" of the simoom, "and, uttering piteous cries, lies down with its back to the coming storm."

The passion of Job's grief (Chap. i. 20) does not grow more impressive to us when we are reminded or informed that the Easterns do not tear the stuff of their robe, but simply rip open a seam, "so that the damage can easily be repaired by a few stitches." While the most graphic and sublime description of a spiritual apparition (Job iv. 12–17) in the literature of the world is simply degraded by the implication that the awful Spirit, before which Eliphaz quaked with a nameless terror, was one of the "Jins"—"a class of beings, both male and female, good and bad, which hold an intermediate position between angels and men, were created before the latter, are made of fire, or *perhaps of gas*, and are capable of assuming a variety of forms, or of becoming invisible at pleasure."

It is not in these detailed applications of his wide knowledge of the modes of Eastern thought and custom to the elucidation of Scripture that Dr. Van-Lennep shines, but in general descriptions of what he has seen and learned during his protracted labours in the East.

EDITOR.

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